

Video Watchdog[®]

the Perfectionist's
Guide to
Fantastic Video

No. 94
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SPIDER-MAN

MINORITY REPORT!
HORROR OF DRACULA!

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Guide to
Fantastic Video

No. 94 / APR 2003

"If we want things to stay as they are,
things will have to change."

—Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa

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Front: Ol' Web-Head is challenged by The Green Goblin in Columbia TriStar's **SPIDER-MAN**, as interpreted here by Charmin' Charlie Largent!

Inside: Tintinnabulatin' Tobey Maguire scales new heights of glory as Your Friendly Neighborhood **SPIDER-MAN**.

Back: Count Dracula (Christopher Lee) suffers a nasty reaction to sunlight in this rare color image of a stage makeup filmed for, but not actually seen, in **HORROR OF DRACULA** (1958) — now available on DVD from Warner Home Video!

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KENNEL

JOHN CHARLES wrote an excellent set of liner notes for Image Entertainment's new double-disc release of **RAIDERS OF THE LIVING DEAD**.

BILL COOKE says it's going to be a long, long time before he watches another Gamera movie.

SHANE M. DALLMANN suggests that everyone check out www.tvhorrorhosts.com and sends special greetings to Ohio's own A. Ghastlee Ghoul.

JOE DANTE says he's currently editing his new picture **LOONEY TUNES: BACK IN ACTION "18/7,"** but he'd drop it all to read Tim's manuscript.

CHARLIE LARGENT made his debut as a TV playwright with "Tagged," the 15th episode of the new **TWILIGHT ZONE**'s first season, which UPN stations aired on February 16, 2003.

TIM LUCAS is about 500 single-spaced pages into the final edit of his **MARIO BAVA: ALL THE COLORS OF THE DARK** manuscript. Only 700 more to go!

KIM NEWMAN's official website can be found at www.johnnyalucard.com.

GARY L. PRANGE can make a killer cous-cous, watch **WHITE ZOMBIE**, reply to a CHFB post, sip a dram of Laphroaig, sniff a rose, and flip the bird at terrorists all at the same time.

GREGG RICKMAN is the author of several books about Philip K. Dick and, most recently, editor of **THE FILM COMEDY READER** (Limelight Editions). He is currently editing a collection of writings about science fiction cinema.

RICHARD HARLAND SMITH is in the process of casting his new play **THE VIY**, which requires 16-17 actors to play 23 different roles. He will be directing the production himself on the New York stage in late Summer or Fall.

REBECCA & SAM UMLAND, we suspect, lead the sort of lives that Donald Cammell could scarcely begin to imagine.

DOUGLAS E. WINTER was in the audience when King Crimson performed "Peoria," as captured on their 1972 live album **EARTHBOUND**, now available on digitally remastered CD from Discipline Global Mobile.

VW THANKS:

Barrel Entertainment (Brian Krueger, John Szpunar), Steve Bissette, Juanita Bowman, Central Park Media, Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment (Kavita Smith), The Daily Bugle (J. Jonah Jameson), the amazing Steve Ditko, DreamWorks Home Entertainment (Cheryl Glenn), Elite Entertainment (Josh Davidson), Film Score Monthly (Lukas Kendall), Irving Forbush, Bruce Holecheck, Home Vision Entertainment (R. O'Donnell), Image Entertainment (Spencer Savage), Kino International (Rodrigo Brandao), Stan "The Man" Lee, McFarland and Co., MGM Home Entertainment (Steve Wegner), Donna & Eddie Moore, Paramount Home Entertainment, Poker Industries (Michael Basden), Retro-Seduction Cinema (Michael Raso, Kevin Shinnick), Something Weird Video (Mike Vraney, Lisa Petrucci), Nathaniel Thompson, Universal, Bob Villard, Warner Home Video (Karen Penhale), our subscribers, correspondents, distributors, and last but not least, all youse guys in the Merry Marvel Marching Society! Excelsior! **It's publishin' time!**

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THE WATCHDOG BARKS



QUICK FLIP through this issue will show you that VIDEO WATCHDOG is, well, a little different this month—hence the epigram I selected for our Table of Contents page.

To begin with, much sooner than we expected (see last issue's editorial) and for the first time ever, there is no "Video Tapevine" section in this issue. This is by no means a permanent change; it's just that, frankly, we didn't have enough VHS reviews on hand to fill a whole column, and since doing things halfway isn't our style, we weren't interested in running just a few. We're also prepping some DVD-R reviews, but likewise, not enough of these were ready to launch a replacement column this time around. On the other hand, we did have a veritable mountain of DVD reviews awaiting the light of ink, to mix a metaphor, so we decided to make DVD the principal focus. As I sat down to shape a portion of this material into a new issue, I really didn't know what was going to result, or how it would all hang together—by omitting "Video Tapevine," we were throwing our usual format (temporarily) out the window, so to speak—but hang together it does, and I think you'll find this month's offering very satisfying. Perhaps even unusually so.

Though the shoe probably fits, we're not going to call this an "All Review Issue," as we did with VW #91, because as Richard Harland Smith pointed out to me, "All Review" was hardly a representative (or flattering) phrase for the sheer wealth of film history, analysis, and contextualizing that was contained in that issue. In this issue, we have singled-out two... let's call them "contributions"... for feature presentation: Gary L. Prange's examination of Kino's new **GERMAN HORROR CLASSICS** box set of four silent *meisterwerks* of Teutonic terror (which also offers a meticulous comparison of two of the titles therein to previous releases), and a superb essay on Steven Spielberg's **MINORITY REPORT** by Philip K. Dick's friend and biographer, Gregg Rickman. Equally deserving of feature status, but offered as our "DVD Spotlight" review, is Charlie Largent's look

at Sam Raimi's **SPIDER-MAN**, which is equal parts review/analysis/essay. And sequestered amid our expanded DVD coverage you'll find Bill Cooke's in-depth examination of Ridley Scott's new "Director's Cut" disc of **LEGEND**, which is certainly detailed enough to qualify for feature presentation—but we've already run a **LEGEND** feature (back in VW #29, which actually had a **ROBOCOP** cover), so we've included it amid our other reviews, which are no less meaty. One of these is a remarkable piece on the classic Hammer films **THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** and **HORROR OF DRACULA** by the estimable Kim Newman, who manages to point out things about both films I never caught or articulated to myself after literally countless viewings.

"Meaty" is actually a good word for this issue, as I can attest after having edited it. Some of our past issues have counted as many as 50, 60, even 70 reviews; herein, in another change, you'll find roughly half that number, but it's not because we've padded the issue out with pictures (as we'd really love to do sometime!). This month's material tends to be longer, deeper and richer, more densely packed with information, interpretation and insight. You have quite a substantial read ahead of you!

This issue also introduces a *permanent* change that we think will please our readers and contributors alike. Starting with this issue, our reviewers' bylines are being moved from the end of their reviews to the beginning. When we started VW, it was uncommon for a review not to end on the same spread where it began, but nowadays, given our more detailed coverage, our readers often have to turn a page, even two or three, before finding out whose work they're reading. While editing this issue, I noticed that this introduced, shall we say, an unnecessary element of suspense into the process. I also came to appreciate that it is an added pleasure to know, from the outset, whose work you're reading.

An exception to this rule is this humble editorial page, which will always be signed at the very end by yours truly...

..... Tim Lucas

WATCHDOG NEWS

TO EAT HIS OWN



The supporting cast of CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST love to go out on a limb.

“WE ARE GOING TO EAT YOU!”: THE THIRD WORLD CANNIBAL MOVIES AND THE INSIDE STORY OF THE GOONA-GOONA FILMS by Stephen R. Bissette is now on sale. It's 336 pages under a new splash of Bissette cover art, squarebound (B&W, glue binding, protective plastic covers) and ready for you to devour at whim.

A considerably truncated version of this text was previously published in Chas Balun's historic THE DEEP RED HORROR HANDBOOK (FantaCo Enterprises, 1989), but this is the complete, unexpurgated version. It's an admittedly rough-and-ready affair, but Bissette has complemented the raw manuscript with the best graphics he could gather—almost 100 pages of illustrations, including cannibal film and zombie artwork by SRB, and an eye-popping array of super-rare movie pressbooks, clippings, ad

mats, etc. from around the world, dating back to the 1890s.

Mind you, this is an archival reproduction of the original 1990 manuscript; not typeset, but photocopied from the author's original Atari-printed manuscript—which was completed *before* the release of key mainstream cannibal epics like **ALIVE!** and **THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS**, before **FRIED GREEN TOMATOES**, the influx of Asian horrors, before the true-life horrors of Jeffrey Dahmer.

What's important is what it *does* have:

- Analysis, insights, and behind-the-scenes stories of those bloody Italian cannibal gems like **MAN FROM DEEP RIVER**, **THE LAST SURVIVOR/JUNGLE HOLOCAUST**, **TRAP THEM AND KILL THEM**, **MOUNTAIN OF THE CANNIBAL GOD**, **CANNIBAL APOCALYPSE/INVASION OF THE FLESH HUNTERS**, **EATEN ALIVE/THE**

EMERALD JUNGLE, **DOCTOR BUTCHER M.D./ZOMBIE HOLOCAUST**, and **CANNIBAL FEROX/MAKE THEM DIE SLOWLY**.

- Cannibal cinema rarities like **CANNIBALS OF THE SOUTH SEAS**, **A SCREAM IN THE NIGHT**, “What's Buzzing, Buzzard?” (Tex Avery's cannibal classic cartoon!), **GOONA GOONA**, **FIVE CAME BACK**, **BACK TO ETERNITY**, **GOW THE KILLER/CANNIBAL ISLAND**, **SPIDER BABY**, **TERROR IN THE JUNGLE**, **AFRICA ADDIO/AFRICA BLOOD AND GUTS**, the Mondo movies, **THE WILD EYE**, **THE VALLEY (OBSCURED BY CLOUDS)**, **HOW TASTY WAS MY LITTLE FRENCHMAN**, **MACUNAIMA**, **SURVIVE!**, **MONDO CANNIBALE**, **THE MAN HUNTER**, **CANNIBAL TERROR**, **CUT AND RUN**, **WHITE SLAVE**, **CANNIBAL TOURS**, and more!

- Genre masterpieces including **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**,

SOYLENT GREEN, THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE, CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST, and others!

● Mainstream off-genre essentials like **SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER**, **THE SKY ABOVE THE MUD BELOW**, **THE NAKED PREY**, **WEEK-END**, **A MAN CALLED HORSE**, **WALKABOUT**, **AGUIRRE THE WRATH OF GOD**, **THE LAST MOVIE**, **QUEST FOR FIRE**, **THE EMERALD FOREST**, **THE MISSION**, and other surprisingly key titles you might not associate with the cannibal films you know and love.

Though much has happened to the cannibal genre in the decade since it was written, "WE ARE GOING TO EAT YOU!" remains a comprehensive overview of the cannibal film genre to that point in time, including coverage of many key films that remain ignored in the lavish full-color books that have been published since. From Martin & Osa Johnson's silent cannibal travelogues to **DOCTOR X** to **CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST** and beyond, it's all here, researched and dissected

with the usual Bissettian obsessive intensity.

Each copy is signed and personalized (per your request) by the author, comes with a free signed print of an all-new piece of art by SRB, and at this time is available exclusively from SpiderBaby Graftix for \$30.00 postpaid (media mail, US only; for higher class mail or shipping, please e-mail Steve Bissette directly for rates; Canada and foreign orders: \$30 US plus shipping).

To place your order, send personal check, postal money order, bank check, or VISA/Mastercard information (be sure to include expiration date, a daytime phone number, your mailing address, and address as it appears on your card). E-mail your order to msbissette@yahoo.com, or send it to SpiderBaby Graftix, PO Box 47, Marlboro VT 05344. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery—though Stephen adds that you will most likely receive your GOONA GOONA soon.

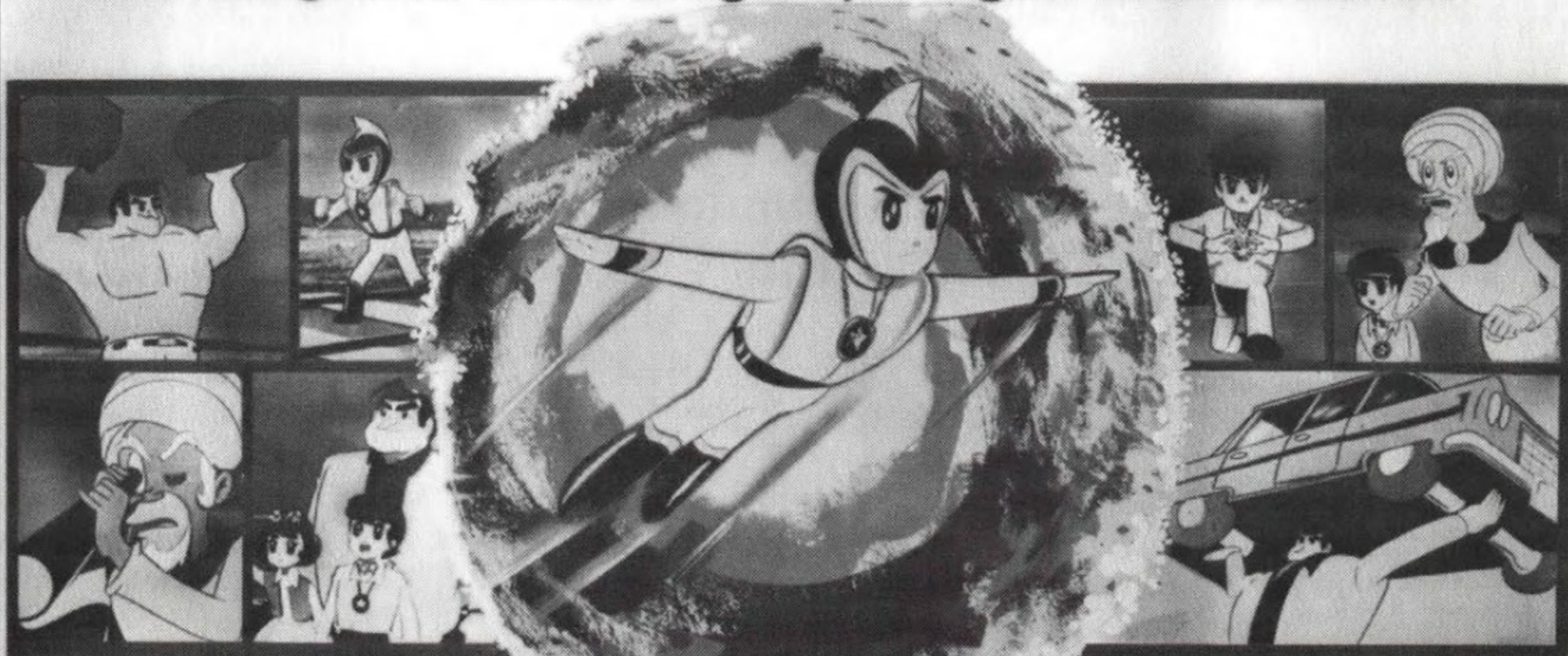
There's a Starman Waiting in the Sky

Something Weird Video's new releases **STARMAN VOLUME 1: ATTACK FROM SPACE & EVIL BRAIN FROM OUTER SPACE** (\$24.99) and **STARMAN VOLUME 2: INVADERS FROM SPACE & ATOMIC RULERS** (\$24.99) contain the usual wealth of extras, but of particular interest are two complete episodes (one per disc) of the early Japanese anime series **PRINCE PLANET**, which have not been generally available since they were first syndicated to independent television outlets in the late 1960s by American-International Television.

Known in Japan as *Usei Shonen Popi* ("Popi the Star Boy"), the B&W series was based on a SHONEN magazine manga strip by Hideoki Anoue and produced by Tele-Cartoons Japan, whose earlier series included the popular **GIGANTOR** and **8TH MAN**. Utilizing multi-plane layered animation effects and elaborate

A BRAND NEW THRILL-PACKED ADVENTURE CARTOON SERIES

hair raising chases- breath-taking escapes -edge-of-the seat excitement



AND INTRODUCING
A DASHING YOUNG SUPER HERO

PRINCE PLANET

52 rousing episodes in black and white

airbrushed backgrounds, **Usei Shonen Popi** was more expressively designed and stylishly animated than the studio's previous work, but its 52-episode run lasted only one year, from June 3, 1965 to June 27, 1966. The program was first announced as an acquisition of AIP-TV in September 1966, but it was not actively marketed until the following year. In the interim, the episodes were dubbed by the familiar voices at Titra Sound Corporation, including Peter Fernandez, Corinne Orr and other artists who had contributed to other Japanese imports including the live action **ULTRA MAN** and **SPACE GIANTS**, and the animated **SPEED RACER** and **MARINE BOY**. An insanely catchy theme song, sung by a chorus of nasal-sounding kids, was contributed by Ronald Stein (**INVASION OF THE SAUCER MEN**, **THE HAUNTED PALACE**).

In the Titra dubbed version, Prince Planet comes to Earth from the Planet Radion, where he adopts the guise of an ordinary Earth boy named Bobby (with huge Walter Keane eyes) and lives on the ranch of Mr. Worthy and his young, trouble-prone daughter Diana. The supporting cast includes the Abadonian wizard Ajababa and the perpetually hungry muscleman Dan Dynamo. Much like **ULTRAMAN**'s Hayata and his Beta Capsule, Bobby is able to summon his alter ego by shouting a magic word (no fan of the series seems to agree on exactly what this word is, but it sounds like "Pa-Pizaow!") that triggers a metamorphic action from a medallion he wears on his chest. The two episodes excavated on the **STARMAN** discs are **VOLUME 1**'s Episode 51 ("Ajababa's Children," which features Prince Planet's arch-enemies Warlock and Dr. Optic)



*In the interest of keeping VW readers
abreast of the latest developments,
here's a report about the latest Uschi Digart titles on DVD!*

and **VOLUME 2**'s Episode 14 ("Attack of Radioactive Ants," which is actually about an invasion of atomic termites).

These appetizers may whet one's appetite for a boxed set of the entire series, but Something Weird's Mike Vraney tells us this is not likely to happen. His collection holds only 10 episodes at present, and his plan is to continue issuing them selectively, as DVD filler, whenever appropriate.

Everything's Coming Up Uschi

Speaking of Something Weird filler, another curio of unusual interest turns up in support of their sexploitation "Double Feature" of **STREET OF A THOUSAND PLEASURES** (directed pseudonymously by **MANTIS IN LACE**'s William Rotsler) and **WAY-OUT TOP-LESS** (\$24.99). Titled "Breast Orgy," it's a two-part, silent, B&W "Big Bust" loop that runs about 26m, and it's deserving of

a footnote in future reference books as the only film ever to feature the combined talents of the buxotic Uschi Digart, Candy Samples and Marsha Jordan! We recognized some of the other ladies in the picture from various Harry Novak shorts, but we can't put names to their, er, faces...

Speaking of Uschi Digart, it seems like everything's been coming up Uschi lately. Retro-Seduction Cinema have released twooshi by Uschi: **ROXANNA** (1970, \$19.99) and **PLEASURES OF A WOMAN** (1972, \$19.99), which respectively pair two sexploitation featurettes directed by Nick Phillips with lukewarm DTV "remakes" starring Misty Mundae and Darian Caine. **ROXANNA**, which runs only 51m 2s, is the dark and fractured story of a suicidal lesbian and is the more interesting of the two originals, thanks to Uschi, some time capsule footage of 42nd Street, and an uncredited guest appearance by another cult actress, Monica Gayle. Uschi is only present in the first 10m or so, but the movie delivers your money's worth of her anyway.

The remake with Misty Mundae, directed by Ted W. Crestview, runs 36m 22s. **PLEASURES OF A WOMAN** (59m 24s) finds Uschi using her ripe body to destroy the only obstacle standing between her and the fortune of a former lover—his lesbian niece. The remake runs 36m 7s and pretty much proves that Phillips' movies were interesting because of the remarkable women in them; if you can't remake *them*, you can't remake the movie. The two originals look spectacular, culled from their original 35mm negative elements. Both discs contain other extras, such as trailers, remake commentaries and interviews with "Film Historian 42nd Street Pete" (who resembles, but is not, Steve Bissette), who discusses Nick Phillips and his body of work, which frequently played on 42nd Street at the Hudson Theater. More Phillips originals and remakes are reportedly forthcoming. The double features are also available on VHS, minus the extras, for the same price.

Something Weird has followed suit by releasing a "Hard-Hitting Double Feature" of two 1971 Harry Novak productions featuring Uschi Digart: William Rotsler's **THE GODSON** and Bethel Buckalew's **BELOW THE BELT** (\$24.99, 91m 21s/89m 43s). **BELOW THE BELT** is most notable for its early 15m appearance by Uschi (which culminates in a splash 'n' thrash swimming pool tryst) and a briefer appearance by Rene Bond, but **THE GODSON** is one of the most interesting pictures ever released under the Boxoffice International banner—if purely for trivial reasons. The extended orgy scene (20:27-35:04, 57:00-1:04:48), which includes a man being double-teamed by Uschi and Deborah McGuire (who was later married to Richard Pryor from 1977 to 1979) was filmed in the

booklined digs of famed science fiction author Harlan Ellison, who can be glimpsed while bookended by a clash of mammaries at 57:05. Thanks to the clarity of DVD and SWV's scintillating digital transfer, the viewer can actually freeze-frame the picture and endlessly peruse Ellison's well-stocked shelves (Kurt Vonnegut's **PLAYER PIANO**, Jack Finney's **TIME AND AGAIN**—both in hardcover, a nice tall stack of **THE NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS**)... or the naked ladies, if you prefer. Even more remarkable is a sex scene between actors Jason Yukon and Lois Mitchell (1:06:55-1:19:31), which was meant to be softcore but apparently was going so well that Yukon decided to cross the line, so to speak. (Even though the moment in question is shot entirely above the waist, you can tell from Mitchell's expression *exactly* when Yukon made his move—we recommend watching from 1:17:56-1:17:59 at half-speed—and yes, Mitchell chooses to stay in character.)

THE GODSON offers an audio commentary track by producer Harry Novak, moderated by VW's own Nathaniel Thompson and **CULT MOVIES** publisher Michael Copner, but unfortunately, neither of these primary points of interest are discussed, as the track focuses instead on Novak and the art of exploitation cinema marketing. In fact, Nathaniel tells us that the track was originally recorded to accompany a completely different movie featuring Uschi Digart, **THE TOY BOX** (now available on a Something Weird DVD with **TOYS ARE NOT FOR CHILDREN**, \$24.99)! For various reasons, it didn't get used on that disc... so collectors interested in **THE TOY BOX** [which we reviewed on tape way back in VW 14:13] should check out the track on **THE GODSON**!

—Tim Lucas



SOURCES

BARREL ENTERTAINMENT

www.barrel-entertainment.com
PO Box 182035
Shelby Township, MI 48318
586-323-1999
Fax: 586-323-3024

CENTRAL PARK MEDIA
www.centralparkmedia.com
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Fax: 732-238-8435

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www.somethingweird.com
PO Box 33664
Seattle, WA 98133
206-361-3759



The Film Bulletin Reviews, 1969-1974

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10 RILLINGTON PLACE

Factual story of British mass sex murderer receives cold, realistic treatment that makes for bleak entertainment. Class situations may respond to fine acting, interesting story, but depressing mood, plus lack of action and sensational aspects, severely restrict appeal for mass markets. Rated GP.

"This is a true story. Wherever possible the dialogue has been based on official documents." This unemotional announcement serves as an appropriate preface to **10 RILLINGTON PLACE**, an equally unemotional examination of one of Britain's best known criminal cases, that of John Christie, a middle-aged clerk who murdered and sexually molested seven women over a period of several years.

In attempting a serious semi-documentary feature, rather than the pandering **PSYCHO** type film the subject could have inspired, the Columbia release emerges as too extreme an example of studied restraint. The resolutely unsensational presentation of essentially lurid events, the almost meticulous acting and carefully naturalistic direction combine to produce an essentially clinical study which, for all its respectability, lacks entertainment values for all but a relatively small portion of the discriminating audience. Instances of riveting drama are provided, but the overall effect is so one-note, so low-key and so depressing that most audiences will question the point of it all. Critical support (there is bound to be some) will give it

a lift in initial sophisticated engagements, but some very snappy salesmanship is called for if this sporadically engrossing item is to penetrate successfully into the mass markets.

Richard Attenborough, made up to resemble Christie, is fascinating as a seemingly pleasant, if meek, character who often poses as a doctor of some sort to entice women into breathing his supposedly anaesthetic but actually deadly gas, after which he rapes and garrotes them. He begins his murders during the war as an auxiliary policeman. In 1949, he rents a room to illiterate John Hurt, his young wife Judy Geeson and their baby. Pregnant and unable to afford another child, Miss Geeson convinces Hurt to consent to Attenborough's performing an abortion. In a quite effectively unnerving scene, Attenborough murders her instead. Believing she died during the operation, Hurt is convinced by Attenborough to leave London and let him handle everything including finding a new home for the baby—which Attenborough strangles. Unable to handle his guilt feelings, Hurt confesses to killing his wife, but later admits he lied to cover for Attenborough. When the bodies are discovered, there's no sign of abortion and, with Attenborough testifying against him, Hurt is convicted and hung. When wife Pat Heywood begins to suspect the truth Attenborough kills her too (offscreen), and goes on to dispatch further victims, also offscreen. Years later, the corpses are discovered hidden in the house and buried in the back yard, and a resigned, impoverished Attenborough is quietly arrested by a single policeman while staring into the river.



Baron Frankenstein (Udo Kier) speared by his own creation, dangles a dripping organ over the third row in the 3-D ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN.

Director Richard Fleischer, whose **THE BOSTON STRANGLER** (1968) was a recent high spot in an uneven career, has opted for a far less flashy approach to this somewhat similar project. Again the real locations have been used and everything is as authentic as possible, but here the actors carry the film. Hurt's portrayal of the slow-witted, confused young loser deftly manipulated by Christie is impressive, and supporting performances are fine. However, Clive Exton's screenplay from Ludovic Kennedy's book is strictly surface stuff, never dealing at all with the reasons behind Christie's crimes. The lack of any sort of humor—understandable with a subject of this sort—is slightly detrimental in that the film at times plays dangerously close to parody, and the unrelieved grimness may produce unwanted chuckles toward the end as the victims pile up. Denys Coop's Eastman Color photography is properly muted and bleak, and John Dankworth's score is good.

1971. Columbia (A Genesis Production). Eastman Color. 111 minutes. Richard Attenborough, Judy Geeson, John Hurt. Produced by Martin Ransohoff and Leslie Linder. Directed by Richard Fleischer.

To date, Columbia has released **10 RILLINGTON PLACE** domestically only on VHS. Amazon.com says it "usually ships in 1-2 business days," but the title does not appear to be currently in print.

ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN

Warhol and his man Morrissey deliver novel horror entry with buckets of blood and some terrific 3-D effects. Given hard-sell, should click in ballyhoo markets where X won't matter. Could also perform well in specialty and campus situations. Rated X.

Frankenstein was never like this, but then he never met Andy Warhol before. The finale of this 3-D Warhol presentation (written and directed by Paul Morrissey of **TRASH** and **HEAT** fame) features Dr. Frankenstein impaled by a stake which protrudes into the audience, his liver hanging from the end bleeding into the fourth row. Filmed in Italy with lush Neapolitan production values, this Bryanston release figures to fan initial interest in metropolitan centers catering to film buffs and camp followers, but for the most part it needs a hard sell of the abundant gore angles and 3-D to score in ballyhoo markets, where the X rating (primarily for nudity and the comically overdone gore) won't prove a hindrance.

Actually, the most commercial aspect of the entire project is its use of 3-D, probably the most

effective since Hitchcock's **DIAL M FOR MURDER**. The process is the same used by recent 3-D rip-offs like **THE STEWARDESSES**, but Morrissey and cinematographer Luigi Kuveiller realize the image must be kept within the frame to seem realistic, and they pull off the kind of mind-bending depth illusions that previous films never managed. When bats fly out of the screen in this picture, people in the first balcony will be ducking. Morrissey (who filmed this back-to-back with a 2-D **BLOOD FOR DRACULA**) sends up the **MARK OF THE DEVIL** genre by simply outdoing it in the gore department. These monsters (male and female) are given to fingering their stitches until their insides drop out. At one point Dr. Frankenstein makes love to an incision in his lady monster's gall bladder, declaring that only through making love to death in the gall bladder can one know life—or something. These funny moments add some zest, to be sure, but for the most part, it plays pretty much like a standard horror entry.

1973. Bryanston Pictures (CCC-Champion & Carlo Ponti-Jean Yanne-Jean Pierre Rassam Production). Eastman Color, 3-D. 95 minutes. Joe Dallesandro, Udo Kier, Monique Van Vooren, Arno Juerging. Produced by Andrew Braunsberg. Directed by Paul Morrissey.

*Although Bryanston Pictures advertised this film in print and trailers as **ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN**, the title on the prints was always **FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN**. It is under this title that the film is currently available in a splendid widescreen (alas, non-3D) DVD from the Criterion Collection. We reviewed their version on its earlier laserdisc release in VW 37:56.*

THE CYCLE SAVAGES

Minor league motorcycle melodrama. More emphasis on crime than cycles. OK dueller for action, exploitation houses, drive-ins. Rated R.

The sole substantial virtue of **THE CYCLE SAVAGES** is the naturalistic, completely believable and seemingly effortless performance by Bruce Dern (last seen in **THEY SHOOT HORSES, DON'T THEY?**) as the psychotic leader of a gang of motorcycle hoods—one of those fascinating acting turns that completely outclass the movies containing them. Good acting, however, has seldom counted for much in this particular genre, and **THE CYCLE SAVAGES**, which is otherwise a pretty crude affair, will have to rely on the standard ingredients of brutality and cheap sensationalism to get by on action house and drive-in dual bills. Some half-hearted propaganda about “the liquor lobby in Washington” preventing the

needed legalization of marijuana will hardly compensate, even among the film's intended audience, for the dimwitted plotting, insipid direction and inept mini-budget production which characterizes the Trans American Films (AIP subsidiary) release, in which grimy cardboard sets and bad lighting are evident throughout.

Compulsive artist Chris Robinson, who draws everything in sight with amazing rapidity, if not facility, becomes the target of a vicious gang of cycle clods for surreptitiously sketching them in various lewd poses to illustrate a sex book. Gang leader Dern slashes Robinson outside the grubby apartment of Melody Patterson, a girl involved with Dern in a vaguely-defined white slavery racket masterminded by his well-heeled brother, cameoed by disc jockey Casey Kasem. She keeps Robinson from going to the police by posing nude for him (rear view). The bikers spend little time on the road, being mostly engaged in dreaming up imaginative ways to crush the artist's hands, but they take time out for an inspirational orgy. They pick up buxom local lass Karen Ciral, gang-rape her and feed her LSD. “There's only one thing women are good for, and that's bein' a whore,” comments Dern smugly, an outlook which should sit none too well with Women's Liberationists. Meanwhile, Robinson and Miss Patterson spend most of their time in bed, she lamenting that he'll find out she's “not a nice person.” Sure enough, he finds out that she's a prostitute and involved with the gang, but too late to prevent his being caught. His hands are locked in a vise as Miss Patterson mumbles, “I told you to get out of this neighborhood.” The police close in and Dern's ill-treated mistress Mary Ayres shoots him as he rides away. The other Cycle Savages split, man, and Robinson and Miss Patterson are left with each other.

Scott Brady has an unbilled bit as a vice cop, but Dern's credibility extends only to Miss Ciral among the dull supporting cast. The dated surfing score by Jerry Steiner of Mike Curb's Sidewalk Productions (Curb and Kasem are listed as executive producers) occasionally sounds as if it was recorded at the bottom of a barrel.

1969. Trans American Films. Movielab Color. 82 minutes. Bruce Dern, Melody Patterson, Chris Robinson. Produced by Maurice E. Smith. Directed by Bill Brame.

*Treated to a beautiful new digital remaster, **THE CYCLE SAVAGES** is now available as part of MGM's “Midnite Movies” line, priced at \$9.95. The company will be releasing a DVD double feature of **THE CYCLE SAVAGES** and **ANGEL UNCHAINED** on April 15, with both features presented in 16:9 enhanced 1.85:1 (\$14.95).*

DEEP END

Teenager's sex obsession leads to tragedy. An odd, often humorous film best suited to selective art markets. Its entertainment values could interest sophisticated youth and college trades. Rated R.

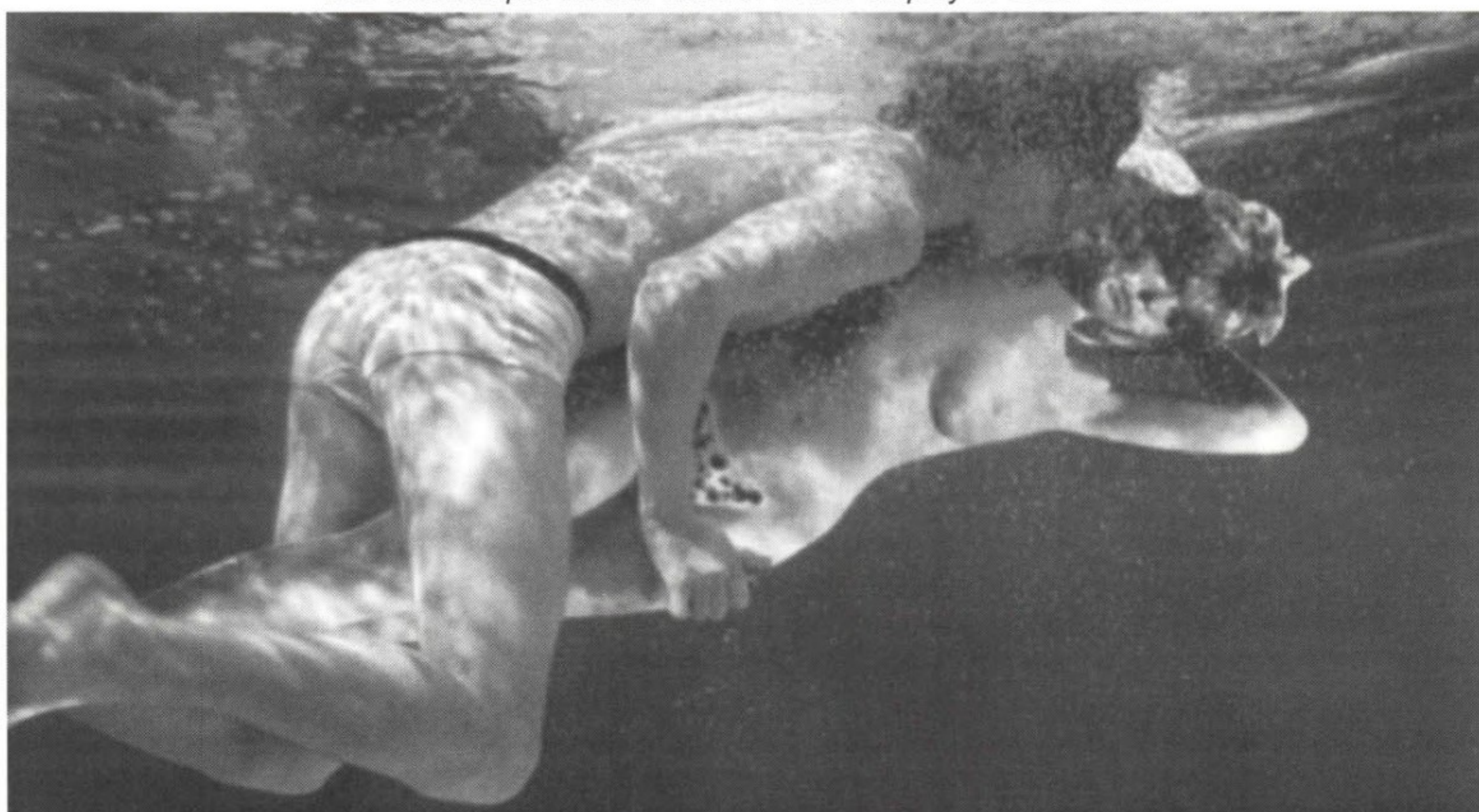
As a bizarre study in obsession, **DEEP END** succeeds well enough to qualify as a fairly promising art house attraction. Despite its basically brooding story, much of this Paramount release is, in its way, quite funny, and could hold moderate appeal for the sophisticated youth audience in metropolitan areas. However, the unsettling, though fantasy-like, storyline is a bit metaphorical for mass tastes. Mixing varying degrees of grim psychological melodrama, European artiness and graveyard humor, Polish director Jerzy Skolimowski (*Le Depart*) has engineered a vaguely surrealistic examination of a 15 year-old schoolboy's growing mania over the promiscuous older girl with whom he works in a seedy London public bathhouse.

Just out of school, awkward youth John Moulder Brown becomes fascinated with capricious bath attendant Jane Asher, to the point of following her around town trying to louse up her relationships with various men. He gets kicked out of a German sex movie (a neat parody complete with hip-booted nude lady doctor dispensing orders) for grabbing Miss Asher's breast from

the seat behind, he turns her fiancé over to the police for allegedly trying to molest him, and blows out two tires on the car of his school sports instructor, one of Miss Asher's current boyfriends. Though Brown's predicament is serious, as he comes closer to mental derangement, funny touches abound: mountainous Diana Dors (on her way to becoming the British Shelley Winters) clasp-ing him to her breast in orgasmic frenzy as she babbles on about football; gently weird encounters with an Oriental hot dog vendor (Burt Kwouk) and a prostitute whose leg is in a cast; his efforts to get a cardboard cutout of Miss Asher home on the subway, and a grapple in the snow during which he dislodges the diamond from her engagement ring. To retrieve the stone, they melt sack-fuls of snow at the bottom of the empty swimming pool. There she lets him make love to her, but he can't perform. As the pool fills with water and she tries to leave, he accidentally kills her by swinging a ceiling light against her head. He embraces her body underwater as blood fills the frame.

Red predominates in the color symbolism used throughout to interesting effect. Though some of the dialogue (by Skolimowski, Jerzy Gruz and Boleslaw Sulick) is a little stilted, Miss Asher and Brown contribute honest characterizations. Brown's aura of clumsy innocence approaching dullness makes his an especially adroit bit of casting. The West German-US production sports some excellent and highly mobile photography by Charly

John Moulder Brown indulges his romantic obsession with Jane Asher with a burlesque theater front-of-house display in DEEP END.



Steinberger, with Munich effectively standing in for the shabbier parts of London.

1971. Paramount (A Maran Film-Kettledrum-Bavaria Atelier Production). Eastman Color. 87 minutes. Jane Asher, John Moulder Brown, Karl Michael Vogler. Produced by Helmut Jedele. Directed by Jerzy Skolimowski.

There are few films we at VW would more like to see released on DVD than **DEEP END**—unfortunately, being a Paramount title that does not take place on the *Starship Enterprise*, this is unlikely to happen anytime soon. The picture—memorable for Asher's wickedly teasing performance and a 14+m sequence scored by Can's song "Mother Sky"—was recently shown at the American Cinematheque in LA with director Skolimowski in attendance, and the print (the director's own) was reportedly in poor shape. **DEEP END** also hasn't shown on cable in about twenty years, so we hope this important '70s film will find its way free of its current neglect before it's too late.

THE LONG GOODBYE

Stylish Robert Altman parody of detective pictures. Will mildly satisfy mystery-private eye fans, but best response likely to come from campus and film buff trades. Elliott Gould turns in a tepid performance, but name adds some value. Modest prospects in general markets. Rated R.

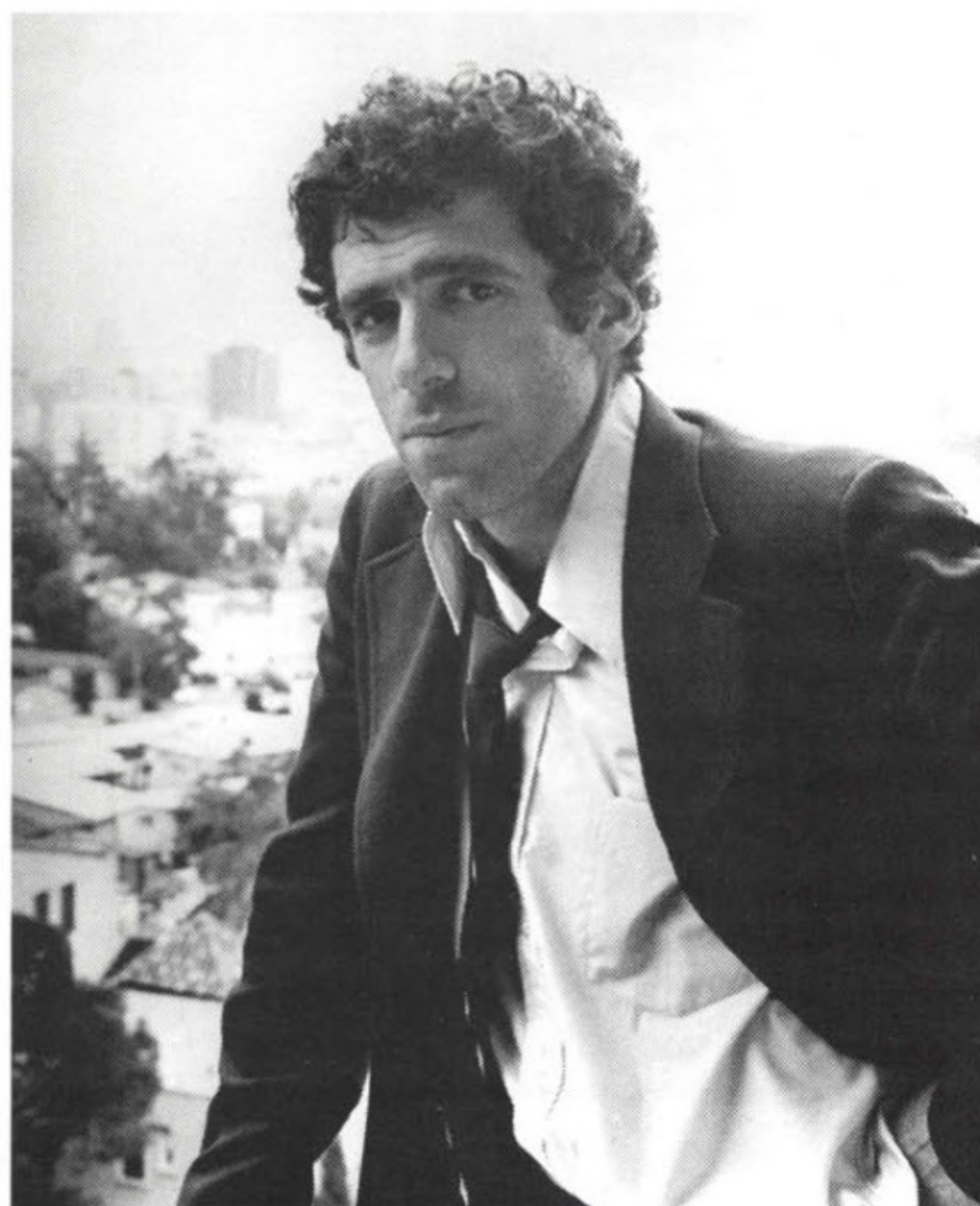
This latest effort from Robert Altman, the iconoclastic director of **M*A*S*H**, **MCCABE AND MRS. MILLER**, **BREWSTER MCCLOUD** and others, is an intermittently successful but always interesting, parody of things in general and the private eye genre in particular. **THE LONG GOODBYE** resurrects Raymond Chandler's ace detective Philip Marlowe, whose last onscreen updating was in 1969's forgettable **MARLOWE**, this time in the person of Elliott Gould, not the perfect choice for the role, wavering between Forties' hip and Seventies' stoned, his inconsistent performance is only occasionally on-target, but it doesn't really matter because Altman's Marlowe is more often an observer than a participant in the action. He doesn't do any detecting and he doesn't even kiss the girl—any girl. Despite its arty approach this United Artists release has enough conventional mystery elements to hold the interest of most audiences even if they find Altman's improvisational directorial style a bit disconcerting. Younger audiences and the buff crowd will take to heart many of the more outrageous touches and the film is likely to end up as so many of Altman's efforts do—an only so-so boxoffice attraction in first runs, but a staple of the campus and revival houses thereafter.

Screenwriter Leigh Brackett co-authored the Bogart/Chandler classic **THE BIG SLEEP**, and

they're still trying to figure out the plot of that one. Even so, it made a fun picture, and **THE LONG GOODBYE** continues the tradition. It's not too strong on plot, but it is rich in incident, to say the least. Gould's chain-smoking Marlowe simply stands in mute witness to the parade of weird characters and *outré* incidents upon which Altman dotes, many of which are wildly, blackly comic. Gould is out to prove the supposed suicide of his best friend (ex-Yankee pitcher Jim Bouton) was actually murder. Along the way, he runs into a hard-drinking Hemingway-type writer (Sterling Hayden), his *femme fatale* wife (Nina van Pallandt), a menacing doctor (**LAUGH-IN** alumnus Henry Gibson) and a sadistic thug (actor-turned-director-turned-actor Mark Rydell), all of whom give him trouble.

Except for Hayden, who overplays his part mercilessly, the entire supporting cast is terrific. Rydell, especially, supplies a couple of priceless moments, one of which has him smashing his girlfriend's face with a Coke bottle just to show Gould how mean he can be ("Her, I love—and you I don't even like!"). Cinematographer Vilmos Zsigmond provides some lovely, carefully controlled color effects to complement the stylishness of Altman's direction, while a humorous background score by

Elliott Gould stars as Raymond Chandler's legendary private eye hero Phillip Marlowe in Robert Altman's revisionistic THE LONG GOODBYE.





James Garner as the more traditional, yet still contemporized gumshoe of **MARLOWE**.

John Williams neatly satirizes the theme-song syndrome.

1973. United Artists. (Kastner-Lion's Gate Productions). Technicolor. Panavision. 111 minutes. Elliott Gould. Produced by Jerry Bick. Directed by Robert Altman.

THE LONG GOODBYE was recently released by MGM Home Entertainment as a widescreen, anamorphically enhanced DVD, priced at \$19.98—the first time this movie has been released to video in truly watchable form.

MARLOWE

Amusing, snappily-paced private eye melodrama makes pleasing entertainment for general trade. Rated M.

"You're something else, Philip Marlowe," purrs slinky Gayle Hunnicutt to suave James Garner, the newest incarnation of Raymond Chandler's ace private eye in MGM's **MARLOWE**. Action-minded and adventure fans in search of the sort of tough 1940s-style thriller which has been rather out of vogue of late should find themselves in agreement. The Gabriel Katzka-Sidney Beckerman production should perform well in general markets, though an uppercase dualler niche would seem best suited to its blend of entertaining elements derived from three decades of private eye pictures. While it doesn't quite manage the

bravado or conviction of its models, **MARLOWE** has enough action and suspense to amuse the mass trade which is quite satisfied with such lively, undemanding escapist fare.

Garner is effectively cast as Marlowe—efficient, hard-drinking, cynical, given to handing out business cards to anyone who'll take them, demolishing villains with witty non-sequiturs, and, in general, acting very much like James Garner. Serious mystery fans should keep in mind that **MARLOWE** is strictly ersatz as far as the classic genre values go, and comparisons to such earlier **MARLOWE** entries as **THE BIG SLEEP** are best not made. This said, however, the schematic intricacies of Sterling Silliphant's pleasantly contrived script are seldom dull, partly due to Paul Bogart's spare, straightforward direction. It's never hard to figure out who'll be killed next and when, but such anticipatory audience interest is what sustains this kind of vehicle through its hopefully surprising *denouement*. Garner is engaged by Sharon Farrell to locate her missing brother, who disappeared after snapping a set of incriminating photos of bigtime actress Gayle Hunnicutt swimming semi-nude with socialite-mobster H. M. Wynant. Along the way, he encounters the expected cross-section of oddball types, most of whom are knocked off. Jackie Coogan is among the first to get it, with an icepick bearing the legend, "Compliments of Crummen's Hardware" (of such humorous details are cool, amoral pictures supposedly made). Suspicious police lieutenant Carroll O'Connor (in the film's best performance) makes his investigation harder, but Garner soon realizes Miss Hunnicutt is being used by a narcotics ring, a mere cog in a wheel of criminality. Attempts are made on his life, and one of the better sequences involves a karate assassin (Bruce Lee) who demolishes everything in sight, and eventually leaps off a building while trying to kill Garner.

The Swinging Sixties background is rather tenuously melded into the old-fashioned melodramatics, and when Garner finally encounters the obligatory hippie pot scene, he almost seems to have wandered on to the wrong set. Rita Moreno, William Daniels and Kenneth Tobey have well-realized supporting roles, and William C. Daniels' MetroColor photography bathes the action in a slightly artificial hue.

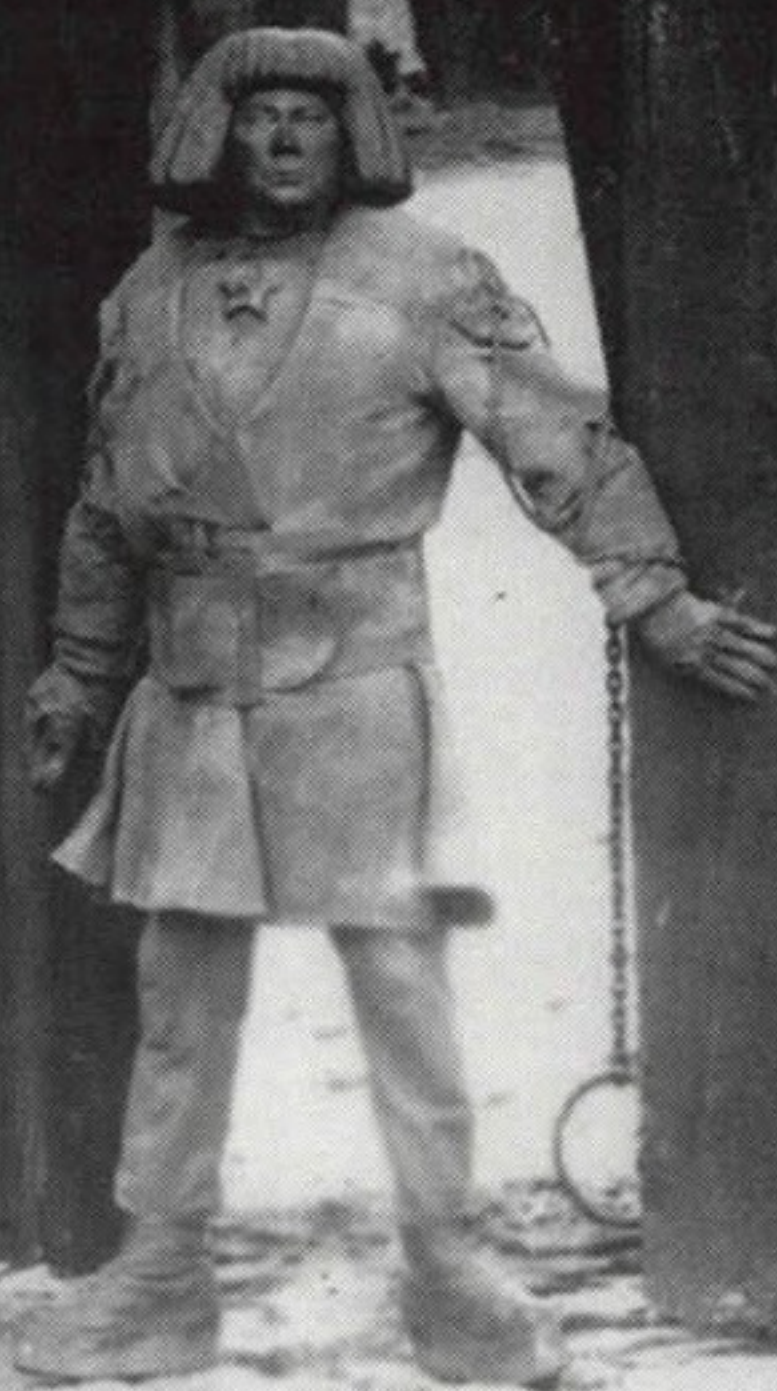
1969. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, MetroColor. 100 minutes. James Garner, Gayle Hunnicutt, Carroll O'Connor, Rita Moreno. Producers: Gabriel Katzka, Sidney Beckerman. Directed by Paul Bogart.

MARLOWE is available on VHS from Warner Home Video, priced at \$14.94.



PORTALS TO A SHADOWED PAST

4 SILENT HORROR
CLASSICS REVISITED



BY GARY L. PRANCE



Kino on Video's GERMAN HORROR CLASSICS, September 2002 release of four German silent horror and fantasy classics, was eagerly anticipated. One of the announced titles, Paul Leni's

WAXWORKS, had never received a proper release on DVD—or VHS, for that matter—in the United States. Another, **THE GOLEM** (1920), had been previously, unceremoniously dumped on DVD by Elite Entertainment without tinting or even a music score. The third film, **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI** (1920), had been previously released on DVD by Image Entertainment with color tinting, decent extras, and an excellent film score by Timothy Brock, but the transfer was plagued by a translucent frame line permanently visible across the top of the screen. The print was otherwise quite good, but even informed, understanding customers found the flaw annoying. Finally, F.W. Murnau's **NOSFERATU: A SYMPHONY OF HORROR** (1922) has seen numerous incarnations on DVD, the best of which was also released by Image. Actually, Image had previously released two versions of **NOSFERATU**, but it was their second attempt (ID0277DSDVD, \$19.95)—released in 2002 to take advantage of the theatrical release of **SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE**—with its improved picture quality and a treasure chest of extras, that set the superior standard for this title on DVD.

Available in the **GERMAN HORROR CLASSICS** box set and individually on VHS, with **WAXWORKS** and **THE GOLEM** also available separately on VHS (priced at \$24.95 each), Kino's presentations are worthy contenders in the silent horror arena. **WAXWORKS**, heretofore available only on barely watchable gray-market tapes, is a particularly delightful surprise. Kino's other two releases, **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI** and **NOSFERATU**, are somewhat more problematical in relation to the earlier Image presentations; each offers its own advantages and some disadvantages, which merit closer investigation.

Paul Wegener as the inanimate statue brought to life, wearing the boots that Frankenstein's Monster would later make famous, in 1920's THE GOLEM.



WAXWORKS is a minor masterwork of German Expressionism, a tidy omnibus film that demonstrates Paul Leni's involvement in every frame. Leni not only directed, but also handled the film's art direction, sharing that responsibility with Ernst Stern. This version was restored by the Cineteca del Comune di Bologna and is comprised of 35mm elements taken from two sources, an English print preserved by the National Film and Television Archive in the UK and a French print from the Cinémathèque Française.

In **WAXWORKS'** framing story, a young writer—played by future director Wilhelm (later William) Dieterle—is hired to write publicity stories about the infamous denizens of a sideshow wax museum. The characters include Haroun Al-Raschid (Emil Jannings), Ivan the Terrible (exquisitely portrayed by Conrad Veidt) and Jack the Ripper (Dr. Caligari himself, Werner Krauss); their three tales, along with the framing story, are the four pillars comprising the anthology. A fourth story about highwayman Rinaldo Renaldini (the subject of an enormously successful novel by Christian August

GERMAN HORROR CLASSICS

1919-1924, Kino on Video, DD-2.0/+,
\$89.95, DVD-1

THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI

Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari
1919, Kino on Video, DD-2.0/MA/+,
\$24.95, 72m 53s, DVD-1

THE GOLEM: HOW HE CAME INTO THE WORLD

Der Golem: Wie er in die Welt kam
1920, Kino on Video, DD-2.0/+,
\$24.95, 84m 32s, DVD-1

NOSFERATU, A SYMPHONY OF HORROR

Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens
2002, Kino on Video, DD-5.1/MA/+,
\$24.95, 92m 40s, DVD-1

WAXWORKS

Das Wachsfigurenkabinett
"The Cabinet of Wax Figures"
1924, Kino on Video, DD-2.0/+,
\$24.95, 83m 20s, DVD-1



Conrad Veidt stars as the paranoid Ivan the Terrible in WAXWORKS.

Vulpius, Goethe's brother-in-law) was never filmed, though his figure can also be seen on display in the waxworks.

In the Haroun Al-Raschid segment, the curator of the wax exhibit accidentally pulls the arm off the wax figure, which inspires the young writer to write a story about how Al-Raschid, the Caliph of Bagdad, lost his arm. What follows is the Arabian fantasy that apparently inspired Douglas Fairbanks to make **THE THIEF OF BAGDAD** (an excerpt from the Fairbanks movie is included on the DVD as an extra, to permit comparison). The story itself is only so-so, with Jannings pouring all of himself—and then some—into the role. Notable, however, are the wonderfully expressive set designs that seem almost organic in shape. Lush fabrics and rococo design complete the fairytale-like ambiance.

The Ivan the Terrible segment is regarded by many to be the crown jewel of **WAXWORKS** and Conrad Veidt's performance as Ivan makes it difficult to dispute that assertion. Veidt's cruel czar is the epitome of absolute power hopped up on madness and drunk on the notion of divine approbation. Czar Ivan spends much of his time in

his palace dungeon, revelling in the suffering of the condemned while admiring his favorite toy—an hourglass. When the name of the victim is written upon the timepiece, it results in his death at the moment the last grain of sand falls to the bottom. When not preoccupied by the suffering of his subjects, Ivan is consumed by suspicion; he trusts no one and no one is safe from sudden accusation, torture and death. Ivan's chief poison-maker, knowing that he is himself about to fall prey to Ivan's paranoia, devises a plan of retribution: he writes *Ivan's* name on the hourglass, just before he is taken away by Ivan's guards.

The next day, Ivan is reminded of an invitation to a wedding by the bride's father. Ivan instantly distrusts the father and orders the old man to switch places with him for the sleighride to the wedding. An assassination attempt goes awry and the father is mistakenly slain with an arrow. Thinking the czar dead, the wedding party can barely contain their relief—which doesn't go unnoticed by Ivan as he reveals that he is very much alive. The double shock of the wedding guests at finding the czar alive and the bride's father dead on her wedding day is palpable and well-filmed. A

curtain of gloom and fear descends upon the party; Ivan cruelly orders the guests to dance and enjoy themselves as the bride goes out into the snow and kneels by her father's body. The czar steals the bride for his own amusement and carries her off to his palace as he orders the groom taken to the dungeon. To Ivan's delight, the bride stumbles upon the dungeon and sees her ill-fated husband-to-be being tortured. As Czar Ivan is about to consummate his conquest, an advisor informs the ruler he has been poisoned and shows him the hourglass with his name inscribed upon it. He is told he will die when the last grain of sand falls to the bottom. As his initial panic subsides, Ivan gleefully comes up with solution that is as much a curse as it is resolution to his predicament—a solution that would make someone with an obsessive-compulsive disorder blanch.

WAXWORKS is virtually a self-contained lesson piece for German Expressionism, displaying the full spectrum of that art movement's influence upon German cinema in one film. Leni saves the most extravagantly expressionistic segment for last. The Jack the Ripper segment is deliriously, archly designed, reverting to the painted distortions and shadows of **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI**. The story is simple enough: the writer and the exhibit owner's daughter find themselves being stalked by Jack the Ripper along the carnival midway. (Jack the Ripper is erroneously referred to as "Spring-heeled Jack," an English urban legend.) In addition to the Caligari-style sets, Leni uses multiple exposures, layering footage of Ferris wheels, merry-go-rounds and the unshakable image of the Ripper to increase the tension of the fiend's pursuit. Cornered, the writer is stabbed in the chest. Clutching the stiletto, he finds that it is his pen and that he hasn't been stabbed after all—the preceding terror was only a dream. To the relief of the young writer and his pretty new girlfriend, Jack is back up on his pedestal where he belongs.

The clarity of the source material on this DVD is quite good. There is some slight nitrate decomposition in a few spots, but not enough to detract from the overall presentation. Kino's **WAXWORKS** is color-tinted and the jewel tones are quite fetching for the most part. If there is a fault, it is that the hue used to represent nighttime is oversaturated, which flattens the contrast by obliterating the darker elements of the image, but it's easy enough to correct by adjusting the color saturation of your monitor. The musical score for **WAXWORKS**, composed and played on piano by Jon Mirsalis, is the most traditional of the scores offered

on the four DVDs released by Kino. It succeeds where too many new silent music scores fail: Mirsalis' music enhances and complements the action, never detracting from the images by competing with them.

Extras on the disc include the aforementioned excerpt from Fairbanks' **THE THIEF OF BAGDAD** (1925, directed by Raoul Walsh) and the Paul Leni short **REBUS FILM 1** (1926), a kind of interactive crossword puzzle. In **REBUS**, one can discern some of the camera and editing style that would later be used by Leni in Universal's **THE LAST WARNING** (1929).

Paul Wegener's **THE GOLEM** is the allegorical tale of the legendary man of clay brought to life by Rabbi Loew to protect his people from the tyrannical decrees of Rudolf II in late-medieval Prague. Though based mostly upon the version of the Jewish legend written by Chayim Bloch, Wegener's clayman is heroic at first, but is eventually usurped by Rabbi Loew's assistant to remove a potential romantic rival. The ensuing murderous rampage results in the Golem running off with the rabbi's daughter and the Jewish ghetto ablaze behind him. The Golem is finally stopped by the curiosity of a small child.

The film would eventually be acknowledged as one of the principal influences—along with **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI** and MGM's **THE MAGICIAN** (1927), also starring Wegener—on James Whale's **FRANKENSTEIN** (1931). Paul Wegener co-wrote the script for **THE GOLEM** with Henrik Galeen, who also penned the screenplay for **WAXWORKS** and **NOSFERATU**, but it's Wegener's baby all the way—actually his third (!) Golem movie, Wegener directs (along with Carl Boese) and plays the title monster. And what a monster it is—ominous and impressive and made believable by Wegener's expressive features, which cannot be constrained by the heavy makeup. Four set-pieces guarantee **THE GOLEM's** classic status: the creation sequence, as the demon Astaroth is summoned to reveal the word that will render life unto the Golem; the Golem holding up the collapsing roof of King Rudolf's throne room; the rampage where the Golem pursues his quarry into a stone tower; and the Golem's final confrontation, which unexpectedly ends its existence.

Like the classic movie monster it would spawn a decade later, Kino's DVD of Paul Wegener's **THE GOLEM** was assembled from different sources into one impressive presentation. The principal source was a Museum of Modern Art print obtained from

UFA in 1936; six pieces of footage and sixteen intertitles taken from a print of **THE GOLEM** archived in Moscow's Gosfilmofund were also inserted by the Filmmuseum of Munich. Censor records from 1931 were used to complete the intertitles, which were translated by Robert Gray of Kinograph; the titles replicate the originals as closely as possible. The color tinting is based on a surviving Italian print from Milan. This restoration was also supervised by the Cineteca del Comune di Bologna.

A bit contrasty, Kino's **THE GOLEM** is nevertheless simply the best version available anywhere. It looks good and yields plenty of detail. The color tints are dramatic and add to the enjoyment of the movie. The music score by Aljoscha Zimmerman is richly evocative of the story's Jewish heritage and serves the film well.

The supplementary materials include an excerpt of Julien Duvivier's 1936 French version, **Le Golem**. The lengthy clip depicts the monster on the loose and is generally regarded as the highlight of an otherwise dull version. Also included is a gallery of still photos and artwork. A comparison of the filmed creation scene to the rather different scene described in Chayim Bloch's Golem book is also offered, along with the Mephistopheles evocation scene from F.W. Murnau's **FAUST**. Another possible **GOLEM**-inspired example that could have been included is the transmutation of the robot into Maria's double from **METROPOLIS** (1926). That said, pressing the up arrow button while the "Start Film" menu option is highlighted will access an Easter Egg that plays Kino's thrilling teaser trailer for the recent Berlin restoration of **METROPOLIS**, the version currently in release around the country and soon to be issued on DVD by Kino.

When **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI**—Robert Weine's expressionistic masterpiece about murder, madness and a somnambulistic monster—was released several years ago by Image Entertainment [reviewed VW 38:9; 71m 19s], it presented a transfer taken from a Soviet negative which had been duplicated on a step printer that placed the frame line *between* the perforations. **CALIGARI**, however, had been filmed using an older model

camera that centered the frame line *at* the perforations; therefore, the frame line was duplicated, resulting in a visible, semi-transparent line going across the top of the screen. David Shepard, the producer of that DVD, decided to allow the line to remain when the film's compositions artistically merited full-screen reproduction, but in shots where it was judged that cropping would not hurt the composition, the line was matted from view. The decision was acceptable—the print was very good otherwise—but when Kino announced their own **CALIGARI** DVD, it was hoped that Kino would release a version that presented the entire image without the line that some found so annoying on the Image disc. In this respect, Kino succeeded; however, apart from the elimination of that distracting crease, the Kino transfer is otherwise slightly inferior to the Image release, which had less speckling and fewer scratches; it is also crisper and has superior contrast.

In a classic scene presaging the Frankenstein Monster's encounter with Little Maria, but with different results, a child makes the acquaintance of THE GOLEM.





*As Cesare the somnambulist, Conrad Veidt abducts Lil Dagover into the expressionist mindscapes of **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI**.*

On the other hand, Kino's **CALIGARI** faithfully reproduces in English the Expressionistic intertitles of the original, including the titles that scrolled up the screen. The Image intertitles also approximated the originals, but not as faithfully. The framing here is a mixed bag as well. In scenes where the Image DVD includes the doubled frame line, we can see more picture information on the left, right and bottom of the screen than on Kino's (the top is about the same). When the frame line is cropped from the picture on Image's **CALIGARI**, the Kino version offers more information at the top, right side and sometimes at the bottom. Both DVDs offer color tinted prints.

Though Kino's **CALIGARI** overcomes the problem of that annoying frame line, it has a significant problem of its own. During the prologue or framing sequence (where Francis [Friedrich Feher] sits with the old man and begins to recount his story), the print is diminished by what appears to be nitrate decomposition that has a

severe solarization effect on the image. The effect lasts until the prologue shifts to Alan's (Hans Heinrich von Twardowski) room.

The Kino DVD offers two selectable music scores. The first is composed and performed by Donald Sosin, the other is a "contemporary orchestral score" by Rainer Viertblock. Both are adequate and neither works against the picture. At times, the Viertblock score is quite effective, but the Timothy Brock score on the Image release—weirdly expressionistic and evocative—is the superior effort. Brock accomplished for the music score what Hermann Warm accomplished with his set design. In the scene where Cesare (Conrad Veidt) oozes along the wall on his way to Jane's (Lil Dagover) house, Brock infuses each cat-like footstep with a note, building the tension until Cesare arrives at Jane's bedroom window. Indeed, Brock's score melds with **CALIGARI** to form one audio-visual work of art.

Like the Image presentation, the Kino disc provides a still and artwork gallery and also an excerpt from Weine's failed, though strangely campy, Expressionistic experiment, **GENUINE: A TALE OF A VAMPIRE**. However, whereas Image offered only a 3m excerpt, Kino provides a 43m condensation. Whereas Image provided an insightful audio commentary by **CALIGARI** expert Dr. Mike Budd, Kino offers behind-the-scenes footage of director Robert Wiene on the set of his biblical epic **I.N.R.I.** The footage, complete with intertitles explaining what is happening, can be quite humorous, particularly when a mass exodus by disgruntled, costumed extras is shown.

So which release is better? That depends. Either DVD would be considered definitive if not for the other. It ultimately comes down to whether one would rather live with the translucent frame line on the Image DVD, or the severe solarization during the prologue on the Kino disc. It also depends upon which music score the purchaser is more likely to prefer. The better of the two options on Kino's release is modern, often ambient, sometimes visceral and occasionally jarring. The Brock composition on the Image DVD uses a haunting string arrangement that perfectly connotes pervasive madness.



Would you sell a used castle to this man? Hutter (Gustave von Wangenheim) interests Graf Orlok (Max Schreck) in a prime piece of English property in NOSFERATU.

Max Schreck worked in relatively few films, but the one role he is remembered for, Graf Orlok from **NOSFERATU, A SYMPHONY OF HORROR**, is one of the most haunting horror characterizations on film. It is no wonder that a story having fun with the fantastic notion that the actor was a real vampire was written and filmed 64 years after Schreck (whose name literally means “terror” in German) died.

Considering that every print was long ago ordered destroyed, after a court sided with Bram Stoker’s widow in her lawsuit against Prana-Film’s unauthorized version of **DRACULA**, the large number of **NOSFERATU** DVD releases utilizing all manner of music scores is amazing. F.W. Murnau’s **NOSFERATU** must be one of the most popular horror films in the public domain.

Long segments of the Kino transfer are noticeably grainier than Image’s version [80m 41s] and often the contrast isn’t as good either; there tends to be more visible detail on the Image disc. That said, the picture quality of Kino’s **NOSFERATU**

improves noticeably during the scenes in the death ship’s hold. Conversely, some of Image’s weakest looking elements occur during those sequences. Overall, the framing of the Image disc is superior, too, with considerably more information on the left side of the screen and often more at the bottom as well. But one benefit of having less image information at the bottom for Kino is that the money shot depicting Graf Orlok’s eerie rise from his box in the hold of the death ship shows, for a change, everything it should—the vampire’s entire head can be seen for the first time without the cropping evident in other editions—including Image’s. Both releases are color tinted, though Kino’s has long stretches in B&W. Also, Kino’s version has the better intertitle translation of the two DVDs, again by Robert Gray.

As is indicated by a 12m difference in running times, Kino’s version also edges out the Image DVD by including shots that are altogether missing from the other release. (Even more shots run a little longer—a few noticeably longer.) For example, when

some of the sailors investigate the earthboxes before the death ship sails, we are shown an intertitle and then a shot of the bill of lading that reveals the name of the ship—"Empusa." These are missing on the Image DVD. Later, when Ellen (Greta Schröder) is at the beach, resting on a bench and suffering from her husband's absence, her neighbors happily bring a letter from Hutter (Gustave von Wangenheim) to her. The Kino disc introduces a much longer scene that includes the couple playing croquet, a mailman giving the letter to the gardener and the gardener handing the letter (which is also lengthier than Image's print) to the happy couple. There are additional shots of the Empusa on the waves and quite a few shots of the Empusa last longer. The Image DVD includes only one shot, of Hutter on horseback, that is not found on the Kino disc.

There is an abundance of extras on both DVDs. Kino's disc delivers excerpts from six of Murnau's films: **JOURNEY INTO THE NIGHT** (1920), **THE HAUNTED CASTLE** (1921), **PHANTOM** (1922), **THE LAST LAUGH** (1924), **FAUST** (1926) and **TABU** (1931). A photo gallery and a scene comparison between the source novel, screenplay, film and radio drama are also included. Four Easter Eggs are hidden within the special features. Using your remote, first select "Scene Comparison: Meeting the Count." Highlight "Novel by Bram Stoker," but instead of pressing enter, press the right arrow button—the Realart trailer for **DRACULA** (1931) will play. Next, highlight "Screenplay by Henrik Galeen" and press the right arrow button to access the trailer for **MARK OF THE VAMPIRE** (1935). The third Easter Egg is a trailer for Hammer's **DRACULA, PRINCE OF DARKNESS** (1965); to access it, highlight "Film by F.W. Murnau" and press the right arrow button twice, followed by the down arrow button. Doing the same with "Radio Play by Orson Welles" plays the trailer for Werner Herzog's **NOSFERATU, THE VAMPIRE** (1979).

By comparison, Image's **NOSFERATU** DVD offers supplemental features that are more complementary to the feature film itself. First is a challenging—if over-reaching—commentary and film analysis by Lokke Heiss, the same commentary Image provided for the original laserdisc and first DVD releases. Also included is a virtual tour of the locations where **NOSFERATU** was filmed, taking us through the land of phantoms and treating the viewer to then-and-now photos of the castles, streets and houses used by Murnau to make his masterpiece. An extensive photo and art gallery is also included. A thoughtful extra is a *positive image* replay of the carriage ride segment that is depicted as a negative image in the film. The replay

reveals that for that particular segment, the driver was cloaked in white and the carriage was painted and draped in white so that carriage and driver would both consistently appear black (while the surrounding scenery changes) during both the negative and positive image portions of the entire carriage ride.

Both DVDs provide a choice of two scores. Image provides an appropriately gothic organ score "compiled and performed by Timothy Howard." The other option is a modern score in 5.0 Dolby Digital performed by the Silent Orchestra. Though surprisingly effective in spots, it can also be frustratingly New Agey elsewhere. A similar dichotomy hampers the Art Zoyd music score on the Kino DVD. Like many modern scores written for silent horror films, it tries to satisfy by providing the ambient, tension-inducing tones often employed in today's horror films. The result is more visceral than cerebral; effective at times, it can also be too bombastic, becoming a distraction—even an annoyance. The other score on the disc was written by Donald Sosin; it works well enough but makes the unforgivable sin of brandishing the human voice (vocals by Joanna Seaton) like a sound effect. A scene that depicts Ellen in distress (at the 0:35:46 mark on the Kino DVD) is accompanied by mewing that sounds like a woman somewhere in between the throes of *le petit mort* and a *grand mal*. What were they thinking?

In regard to modern scores for silent classics, DVD producers should be commended for trying something new—and the artists should be applauded for taking an interest in an older entertainment medium and art form. But restraint is a sign of artistic maturity and a little of that would go a long way to making many of these scores more palatable. Embellish the artistry on the screen, whether it is comedic, dramatic or horrific—don't distract from it.

Both **NOSFERATU** discs have considerable merit. And either DVD is far superior to the numerous **NOSFERATU** pretenders out there. Ironically, as in both **CALIGARI** discs, it is only when both DVDs are directly compared to each other that the flaws of either become apparent. This suggests that the definitive Region 1 **NOSFERATU** DVD has yet to be produced and will probably come from whichever company—Image Entertainment or Kino on Video—is the first to update and reissue their version of Murnau's symphony of horror.

Kino's DVDs of **WAXWORKS** and **THE GOLEM** are unqualified winners, while their versions of **THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI** and **NOSFERATU**, despite a few misfires, are—along with Image's entries—contenders for top spot.

For now.





A Phildickian Look at

MINORITY REPORT

Essay
by Gregg Rickman

2002, DreamWorks Home Entertainment,
DD-5.1 & 2.0/DTS/16:9/LB/ST/CC/+, \$29.95, 144m 18s, DVD-1

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FROM ITS OPENING IMAGES, **MINORITY REPORT** is saturated with images of eyes, and of watery fluid, the latter submerging the Fox and Dreamworks logos, the former to the fore as the son of cuckolded husband Howard Marks ("You know how blind I am without my glasses") pokes out a magazine photograph's eyes with a scissors. Director Steven Spielberg doesn't go so far to directly quote Luis Buñuel's infamous eye-slicing shot from *Un chien andalou*, complete with watery, dripping eye matter, but this razor-cut film comprises, if not an assault on audience sensibilities, an assault on easy assurance that futuristic technology will somehow save us from terror, crime and death. For a film on the boards well before September 11, 2001—and based on a short story first published in 1956—**MINORITY REPORT** was remarkably on target for America's mood in the summer of 2002, which is perhaps why it was so well received.

Now available as a two-disc DVD, **MINORITY REPORT** looks much cooler and bluer on the home screen than it did in theaters. As explained in the supplementary materials on the second disc, the film's color desaturation was deliberate, but movie film made **MINORITY REPORT** seem more naturally lit in theaters than does the metallic hues of its digital transfer. The film's 2.20:1 ratio (slighter than the 2.39:1 designated on the packaging) loses some of the Washington Monument on the screen's far right during a late-film dialogue, but otherwise seems well-cropped, and its layer change is nicely placed over a still of one of bereaved mother Lara Clarke's photographs. Sad to say, the supplementary materials seem rather paltry, consisting of 17 segments of about 3-10m each of moderately informative, but too briskly moving, interview material, with the greatest emphasis laid on the special effects. All of these clips are overlaid with John Williams' score to a distracting degree, as if P.T. Anderson was doing the sound mix. There is also a decent archive of production photos, concept art and the like, but one looks in vain for interviews with the film's many striking minor characters (who include, in a nice gesture for genre buffs, Jessica Harper) who help fill in this long film's background, combining to create a lively and vivid Washington, D.C. of 2054.

MINORITY REPORT is set around the time of Spielberg's last film, **A.I.: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE**, with which it forms a diptych of a coldly

commercial future America that's an easy extrapolation from contemporary trends. (One wouldn't have been surprised to find Professor Hobby advertising robot children in a passing ad.) The witty social critic of Spielberg's earliest films (the "L.A. 2017" segment of **THE NAME OF THE GAME**, **THE SUGARLAND EXPRESS**, and of course, **JAWS**) reemerges here—after a quarter century nap in the cotton wool of his genre pictures from **CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND** forward. As the film's hero strides through a mall, scans of his eyes set off commercials targeted just to him. Of course, Dreamworks has it both ways, selling product placements to The Gap, Ben & Jerry's, *et al* at the same time these scenes amusingly spoof the consumer-profiling "cookies" of internet and other commerce. But this is not the film's only contradiction.

MINORITY REPORT is based on a short story of the same name by Philip K. Dick, whose works have officially inspired two other Hollywood blockbusters (**BLADE RUNNER**, **TOTAL RECALL**) and three other low-budget affairs (**SCREAMERS**, **IMPOSTER** and the French comedy **BARJO**)—as well as numerous rip-offs and *hommages* from other directors, from the killing machines who disguise themselves as wounded soldiers in **THE TERMINATOR**, to the "Perky Pat" fast food of David Cronenberg's **EXISTENZ**. Like most of the other Dick film adaptations, and the forthcoming John Woo/Ben Affleck **PAYCHECK**, **MINORITY REPORT** is based on one of Dick's early stories, as opposed to a morally complex later novel such as **DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?**, whose nuances inflected **BLADE RUNNER** for the better. It's a clever tale whose basic concept—the same as in the film—is more resonant than the variations Dick spun from it in the original story. Similarly, Scott Frank and Jon Cohen's screenplay is a valid extrapolation from Dick's concept, very carefully worked out. It must be admitted, though, that the film's last half hour—after the confrontation with Leo Crow—turns an intriguing mystery into a more routine whodunit, with about two too many "surprise" reversals. The film's finale is pure **L.A. CONFIDENTIAL**, with happy endings all around, which shouldn't surprise us, coming from this director. But up to that point, **MINORITY REPORT** is Spielberg's strongest outing in years, and he deserves the praise he's received for his fluid and speedy filmmaking. If Spielberg was a new director, instead of a veteran deep into a very long career, he would be receiving due acclaim as a brilliant newcomer. As it is, after a run of bad genre films culminating

Tom Cruise stars as Precrime prevention officer John Anderton, who can also envision the title pages of outstanding articles before they are written!

with the dreadful **THE LOST WORLD**, he seems reborn with this film, **A.I.**, and the new century.

MINORITY REPORT is about a bad few days in the life of John Anderton (Tom Cruise), captain of the "Precrime" unit in charge of arresting murderers *before* they commit their crimes. This feat is made possible by the three precognitives Precrime keeps floating in a nutrient bath, whose anticipatory visions appear on large telescreens for the officers to decipher. The three precogs' names are Agatha, Arthur and Dashiell, cutely named after crime novelists Christie, Conan Doyle and Hammett. Anderton's a detective, but though he does a good job running around Washington, it's really other people who first figure out the film's great mysteries: Who exactly is it that the precogs say Anderton's going to kill? And exactly who has set him up for this murder?

The film is rooted in a very well-constructed screenplay, with unifying motifs that tie its vast, sprawling tale together without too many obvious machinations. One good example is the film's opening with the son of its first would-be killer, the luckless Howard Marks (Ayre Gross), practicing memorizing the Gettysburg Address, and closing with Anderton's father figure (his boss, Lamar Burgess, played by Max Von Sydow) planning to kill his protégé with a Civil War-era gun. This "War Between the States" motif is resolved with a reunion of the sundered couple, Anderton and his ex, Lara

Clarke (Kathryn Morris). All the film's major characters, motifs and themes are as carefully entwined. **MINORITY REPORT** is a film about male posturing, female insight, real and metaphorical blindness and the possibility of real insight into oneself and others. When we first see Agatha (Samantha Morton), she's submerged in her nutrient bath as an air bubble escapes from her nose and floats to the surface. Much later, an air bubble from Anderton's nose calls attention to his hideout below the surface of a bath, as he dodges the Precrime unit he once commanded, dispatched to find him on the precogs' say-so. We have thus linked Agatha's submersion and Anderton's, Agatha's insight and Anderton's blindness—he's hiding in a slum with his new, still regenerating eyes bandaged over, his old real eyes gouged out.

"In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is King," says a drug dealer (with hollowed-out eye sockets) to Anderton, as the detective buys some "Clarity" early in the film. Late in the film, Anderton uses his one surviving real eye to break into the "temple" of the precogs in order to find Agatha. Throughout the film, Anderton is haunted by the disappearance and presumed death of his son Sean. He uses the drug Clarity to reconnect with the boy, who now exists only as a library of holographic images, which in their haziness rhymes with the precogs' visions. Sean had disappeared many years earlier, with Anderton submerged in

The hunter becomes the hunted when Anderton is determined by Precrime's precogs to be a future murderer.





Recovering from a rough-and-ready eye transplant, Anderton must avoid detection by spider-like, computerized scouting devices.

a public pool as the two played competitive games (who can stay submerged the longest). Late in the film, Agatha describes what would have been Sean's future life to his still distraught parents; he would have married a girl named Claire.

He would also have become a champion runner. In one of his hologram records, we see that John taught Sean to "keep running." Anderton is a highly competitive man, furious at ceding authority to Department of Justice investigator Danny Witwer (Colin Farrell) in the film's early going, and of course ready to run hard and fast to avoid being "haloed"—ie., captured and placed in a coma—for the murder he's supposed to commit. "Everybody runs." Yet it is during his underwater breathing contest with his son that Anderton loses him; submerged, he lacks foresight. This rhymes with Anderton submerged in a filthy bath as he tries to avoid being submerged in Precrime's Hall of Containment with the other living dead. It also tallies with Agatha's life underwater, where she possesses a foresight all the males in the film lack: precogs Art and Dash, Anderton, Witwer, and Burgess.

Yet it is Agatha's submersion, her life as a precog, that forces her to relive her mother's death over and over—a murder by drowning. "Can't you see?" she cries to Anderton, reaching up and grabbing him from underwater. It is in fact his questions about that woman's death that get the film's

archcriminal, Burgess, to arrange for Anderton's framing, a circumstance Anderton turns on Burgess in the film's melodramatic *dénouement*.

MINORITY REPORT's pace is so hectic, as it covers all this and many more details of Anderton's life and flight, that it fails to dwell on its humanistic themes—including the key phildickian question, raised prominently in **BLADE RUNNER**, "What is it to be human?" We never see the moment of realization when Anderton recognizes that the precogs employed by Precrime are more than just "pattern recognition filters," but in fact are fully human. A splendid moment, when Agatha, kidnapped and brought out into the real world of Washington, D.C., wonders "Is it now? I'm tired of the future..." passes all too quickly.

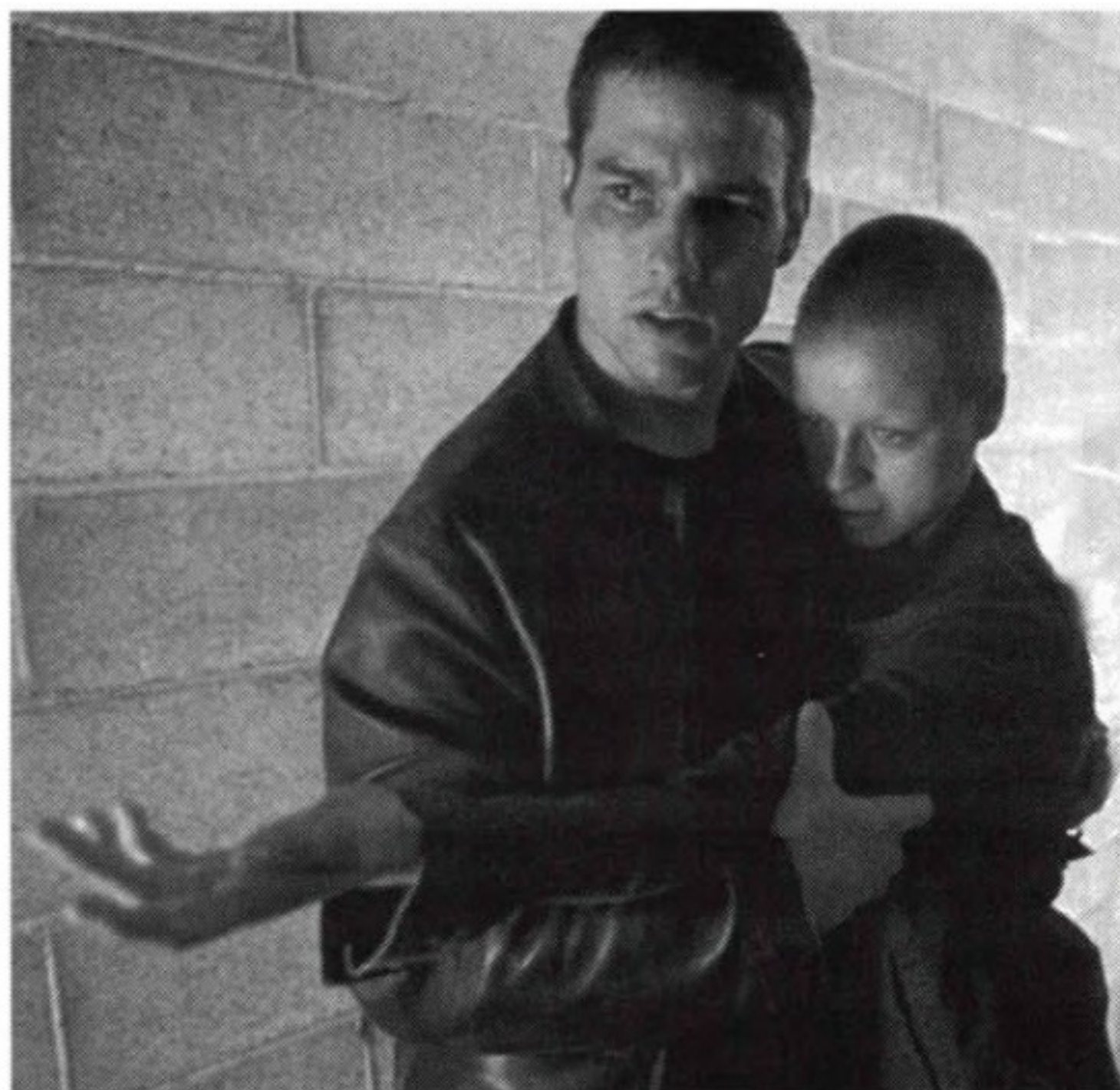
Also sketched in, but underdeveloped, is the religious awe the miracles wrought by the precogs have inspired in this all-too-familiar world of the future. (The same extremes of rich and poor as exist now exist then, as we see in the upscale digs of Anderton, Lara, and Burgess, which exist in sharp contrast to the slums the police sweep through to locate the fugitive.) This is signaled by the precog corps' self-image as being "more like clergy than cops"—Biblical character names like Gideon (for Precrime's crypt-keeper), terms such as "wearing a halo in hell" for the half-life state of murder detainees, the worship with which Agatha

is greeted by the vulgarly secular hacker Rufus Riley (Jason Antoon), and, perhaps most interestingly in the overt religiosity of Anderton's rival, the seminary-trained Danny Witwer.

Witwer's a very interesting foil for Anderton. Something of a puritan, he suggests Kenneth Starr in his relentless pursuit of his rival, for whom he seems to bear an almost prissy dislike, as seen by his pleased distaste for the illegal drug vials he boosts from Anderton's apartment. He kisses a cross before fighting with Anderton in the auto plant, and again after being fatally shot by Lamar Burgess. Dismissed as "Father Witwer" by Anderton, he too is one of **MINORITY REPORT**'s failed males, as he lacks the foresight to see Burgess is the mastermind behind the death of Agatha's mother, Ann Lively (Jessica Harper), confronting Burgess with his theories about that death while alone with him, and handing him Anderton's gun.

Burgess, too, is blinded by his arrogance, and his willingness to sacrifice the one (Ann Lively) so that the many (potential murder victims) can live—thanks to the precogs, of whom Agatha is essential. Von Sydow towers over Cruise physically, and as an acting presence, in their scenes together—not that Cruise is bad in the role. Normally a placeholder for an action hero in dreary fare like the **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE** series, Cruise's acting abilities seem energized by this project, registering genuine glee when he thinks he'll be able to kill the man who killed his son.

As he travels through the Washington area, Anderton encounters a rogues gallery of odd characters, all vividly realized in brief performances by Tim Blake Nelson (Gideon), Peter Stormare (Dr. Eddie), and several others. This puts **MINORITY REPORT**—which Spielberg calls a *film noir* in his commentary—in line with such other picaresque *noirs* with vivid minor characters as **THE LADY FROM SHANGHAI**, **THE KILLING**, or what many people call the first American *noir*, **THE MALTESE FALCON** (1941), authored by the original Dashiell, surnamed Hammett. *Film noir* style was imported wholesale into the science fiction film with **BLADE RUNNER** back in 1982, creating the hybrid known to some as "*tech noir*." Spielberg's **E.T. THE EXTRATERRESTRIAL** swamped **BLADE RUNNER** at the box office back then, but has come to seem a back number in terms of its influence next to the still fertile *tech noir* subgenre (**DARK CITY**, **THE MATRIX**, *et al*) inaugurated by that first Dick adaptation. Twenty years later, Spielberg finally joins the future of the genre, creating a dark, fearful film about future technology.



On the run from his partners, Anderton abducts the precog Agatha (Samantha Morton) in an effort to understand—and thus avoid—the inevitable.


Interestingly, **MINORITY REPORT** also quotes one of the first films ever made involving a city-wide manhunt, surveillance technology, and stolen children: Fritz Lang's **M** of 1931. In **M**, a blind balloon peddler "witnesses" one of the killer's abductions, and helps catch him; in **MINORITY REPORT**, a balloon peddler making a sale to a child is used to hide Anderton and Agatha from the police in a mall.

One of the film's most vivid minor characters is Lois Smith (Jack Nicholson's sister in **FIVE EASY PIECES**) as Iris, co-creator of Precrime with Burgess—its "mother." Bidding *adieu* to him, she kisses Anderton full on the lips, a startling moment that recalls the Oedipal subtext of so many other Spielberg films, most recently **A.I.** (or "The Mommy Returns," as *VILLAGE VOICE* critic J. Hoberman called it). Per the course for Spielberg, the nuclear family is regenerated at this film's end, and as is also usual with Spielberg, most of the film's material involving the lost son is mawkishly sentimental. This, however, has little to do with the film's outstanding reason to be, its commentary on our contemporary surveillance state and our declining civil liberties. Predictably, the film is more a vivid illustration of that problem rather than any kind of lucid argument, given the scientific implausibility of precognition (actually handled more believably in Dick's 1956 story than here, with precogs who somehow, mentally emboss victim and killers' names on lottery-style wooden balls). Post-Sept. 11 issues of preventive detention aside,

there are many scenes that drive our present-era loss of civil liberties home to even the most inattentive viewer: omnipresent eye scans, commercials that call you by name, the mechanical spiders that invade homes and apartments in search of their designated target.

Above all, there is the film's repeated use of eye imagery. From the opening scene on, Anderton is exhorted or told "watch the rain with me," "watch this Danny Witwer," "the eyes of the nation are upon you," "she only has eyes for you"

and that "the dead don't die—they look on and help." The "mother of Precrime's" first name is Iris, and there are too many purely visual evocations of the eye to count.

BLADE RUNNER was also similarly saturated with images of eyes, linked there explicitly to the existence or lack thereof of replicant souls. **MINORITY REPORT** builds on **BLADE RUNNER**'s achievement and is one of cinema's best *tech noirs* to date, creating a vivid future world with relevance to our own. 


MINORITY REPORT: A Supplement Report

By Rebecca & Sam Umland

D*reamWorks* Home Entertainment has issued **MINORITY REPORT** as a two-disc DVD set in both widescreen and fullscreen formats. The first dual layer disc contains the near two-and-a-half hour feature, while the second disc contains a veritable cornucopia of supplements: the various documentaries alone total 84m 22s. In addition to the documentaries, there is an "archive" section that contains a vast array of materials. There are several dozen stills detailing the production designs of Alex McDowell (**FIGHT CLUB**); sketches and photographs of the costumes, props, "Mag-Lev" vehicles and greenhouse plants; storyboard sequences; three different theatrical trailers totaling approximately 5m; cast and crew bios; and production photographs and notes.

Although the interviews contain the expected comments by Tom Cruise and Steven Spielberg about how each looked forward to working with the other, there are some surprises. While he has been characteristically reticent to discuss his films, the documentaries, remarkably, include rather lengthy comments by Spielberg discussing every aspect of the film's production. He looks in detail at the stunts, how the near-future world (52 years hence) was conceived and designed, how cinematographer Janusz Kaminski achieved the film's gritty, blue steel look (the unusual "bleach bypass" process on the original negative), and he also discusses aspects of the script in terms of his concern with the future of the US Constitution. As might be expected, the cutting-edge digital effects—481 of them (!), created by Industrial Light & Magic (ILM)—are explored in detail; all of the effects artists comment on Spielberg's hands-on approach. Indeed, it would appear that he was intimately involved in every aspect of the post-production.

In the disc's longest documentary section, "Deconstructing **MINORITY REPORT** (32m 54s), Spielberg talks about the three-day pre-production "think tank" he organized that brought together a number of intellectuals and scientists whose discussions led to the design of the film's near-future world, including police weapons and the non-fossil fuel "Mag-Lev" vehicles. Among the more interesting of the imagined police weapons is the "sonic-boom gun" that renders the target unconscious rather than killed when shot, and the aptly named "sick stick," that causes the person who comes in contact with it to violently vomit. The film's several action sequences are broken down and discussed in detail, although the film's most dazzling stunt sequence, set in an autofac—an automated automobile factory—is given a comparatively perfunctory examination. Still, the additional disc contains such a wealth of materials that it is hard to find room for complaint.

Although the keeppcase of the widescreen edition avers that the film is presented in its original 2.39:1 ratio, it is actually framed at 2.20:1, with a slight loss of picture information on the top and bottom of the frame as compared to the fullframe version. The picture sharpness is excellent, with good contrasts, though there is an intentional gritty look given the film's *noir* style. The DD-5.1 soundtrack has a robust subwoofer bottom, as does the disc's outstanding DTS soundtrack (which we preferred), though both soundtracks tend to stay confined to the front channels and have rather modest directional effects. A French DD-5.1 track is also provided, as are subtitles in Spanish, French or English; the film is also accurately closed-captioned. The feature has been allotted an acceptable 24 chapter selections, and the second disc includes a trailer for the Activision video game, but thus far, we have declined the opportunity to check it out. 



SPIDER-MAN



Reviewed by Charlie Largent

The bite of a radioactive spider is a booster shot that kicks Peter Parker's Wonder Years into overdrive; he's injected with powers that are, in effect, a super-charged parody of puberty. This awkward kid already suffers the same guilt and confusion of any normal, horny teenager, but now... his senses literally tingle at the hint of a cool breeze, a mass of prehensile hair sprouts from his palms and, most damning of all, he cuts loose with a sticky jet stream of webbing that is both a mode of transport and a weapon: the Sex-Ed version of the Body Politic. The most conflicted human insect since Gregor Samsa of Kafka's *METAMORPHOSIS*, Peter's mind isn't ready for what his swelling muscles are telling him. As he explains in an echo of that other freakishly empowered teenager, Carrie White, "This is my gift, my curse..."

Spider-Man was *born* cursed in 1963, in the wake of assassination and war. The two-faced Spider-Parker signified the ambivalence with which we nervous mortals began to regard our fallen heroes, and their replacements. He was mistrusted by the public he sought to help, despised by the newspaper that employed him and

feared by friends and family alike. At the end of any Spider-Man adventure, the villain would be defeated—but then so would Spider-Man. Full of self-loathing, self-abuse came naturally and often to Peter Parker; this particular superman's Fortress of Solitude was... himself.

Making his debut in the fifteenth issue of Marvel Comics' *AMAZING FANTASY*, Spider-Man was conceived by writer/editor Stan Lee and artist Steve Ditko as an unapologetically *au courant* superhero. The web-spinner's split personality is, appropriately, equal parts of Lee's light-hearted, Ho-Daddy humor and Ditko's profoundly idiosyncratic individualism. Ditko was, and remains, an artist whose quirky take on anatomy translated into a bona-fide philosophy

SPIDER-MAN

2002, Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment, DD-5.1/MA/16:9/LB/ST/+, \$29.99, 121m 3s, DVD-1

Is it Tobey Maguire or the CGI effects wizardry of John Dykstra? We don't care—they both do a great job in SPIDER-MAN.

of life itself: his pencil would begin to delineate a character with the assurance of the great caricaturists—and then, suddenly, somewhere around the wrist or backbone, the line would take a preposterous left turn, resulting in an image that literally diagrammed his characters' inner conflicts; a unique mixture of brash assurance and uncertainty—the perfect cocktail for Spider-Man.

To conjure up another of his finest creations, Ditko is the Dr. Strange of comics (the creation of STRANGE TALES' resident Sorcerer/Detective secured Ditko's standing as a real Dark Artist). But with a craftsman-for-hire resumé that encompasses DARING LOVE, GORGO, GET SMART and BIG BOY COMICS, we can, thankfully, never pin this guy down. That, in a sesame-seed bun with very special sauce, is the contradiction of Steve Ditko, who really listens to the music in his own head and no one else's; he must have loved drawing The Sandman (who debuted in THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #4), a mercurial character he himself inhabits so well.

No wonder that Spider-Man's most telling characteristic is his persistent aloneness. In street clothes, Peter Parker was a timely teenage nebbish, the bastard child of Woody Allen and James Dean. As Spider-Man, his spider-sense of humor bloomed; he became a hipster comedian, working the room with derisive one-liners echoing the abrasive putdowns of Jack E. Leonard and Don Rickles. He mocked his adversaries, but it was also clear that he was mocking authority. He was eager to don his costume, not so much to punish villains, but to escape his own crummy existence. That he was a misunderstood teenager first and a misunderstood superhero second was the irresistible bait to a legion of comic fans who had become bored by the civil and obedient Superman; they were turned on by Ditko's springy action panels and at one with Parker's loner persona. Their mantra, resonating no further than the walls of their own bedrooms, "I am Spider-Man!"

Over the decades, Spider-Man has endured abuse from all quarters, but his less-than-amazing depiction in impoverished television films and cartoons cut deeper than any editorial diatribe from J. Jonah Jameson. It was 38 years before he found a faithful translator, 38 years of limited animation and limited actors in red and blue Under-Roos.

In 1967, pop culture ate itself—or, more to the point, the comic artists who were mined by painters and sculptors like Roy Lichtenstein and

Richard Hamilton began to borrow back from their borrowers. Movies, print and TV were inoculated with comic art and everything was just Super. Spider-Man made his debut on September 9, 1967 as an ABC Saturday morning cartoon produced by Grantray-Lawrence Animation; after delivering 40 13m stories, the company went bankrupt and producer Steve Krantz put the Saturday morning series' two remaining seasons in the hands of New York-based animator Ralph Bakshi. Until the show ran out of steam in September 1970, it was a rambunctiously primitive but effective expression of the comic book.

In the early 1970s, Spider-Man took a spin as a live-action character; he appeared in three 1m educational segments of THE ELECTRIC COMPANY, joining Jiminy Cricket and other animated icons slumming in public service announcements. Better that gig than his next real-life appearance, in CBS's hour-long live-action THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN which ran from May 1978 to July 1979. In this show, the spider-pajamas were worn by Nicholas Hammond (formerly one

*The 1964 issue (#14) that introduced Spidey to his most formidable foe.
Art by the inimitable Steve Ditko.*





The unmasked Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) eludes discovery by the visiting Norman Osborn (Willem Dafoe).

of the Von Trapp children in Robert Wise's **THE SOUND OF MUSIC**), with the distinctive white eyes of Spidey's mask replaced with silver discs that looked like bathtub drainguards. The show brought the ol' web-slinger down to earth with a mighty big thud; it had neither the technology or the talent to show Spidey in his bounding good humor—a quality even the low-rent 1967 cartoon was able to accomplish.

The resilient webmaster retreated to the first dimension and starred in another Saturday morning TV cartoon from 1981 to 1986. Narrated by Stan Lee, the show boasted the great June Foray (Rocket J. Squirrel, Natasha Fatale) as Aunt May. A 1994 animated series on Fox, **SPIDER-MAN** (which eventually morphed into **SPIDER-MAN UNLIMITED**) reached its limit in 1999.

Spider-Man has become a multi-media perennial, digitized in video games, "simulated" in theme park attractions (you must be 48 inches tall to ride alone) and made flesh and blood on the tube, but he's never really seemed human (it was his vulnerable emotional state that made him unique in the first place); he needed a director with a talent for both the manic and the depressive. So cue the man with the rocket powered camera—the man who *had* to make movies, it was his gift... his curse. And speaking of curses...

This rickety sled is set close to the ground and hurtling down a shaky slope at bullet train

speed. Whiplash is the least of our worries; our ride is headed straight toward the gaping maw of a gibbering zombie, eager to dig its cracked fingernails into our necks and feast on our flesh. The unhinged ghoul is one of **THE EVIL DEAD** (1982) and the man pushing the sled is the director, Sam Raimi. Most of Raimi's early movies (particularly the sequels to **THE EVIL DEAD**, 1987's **EVIL DEAD 2: DEAD BY DAWN** and 1993's **ARMY OF DARKNESS**) were brimming with such garish moments, but they were *magisterially* garish; he managed to marry wit and sophistication to preposterously gross imagery without killing the cheesy energy of his inspiration. Raimi didn't want to disgust us; he wanted to return us to the uncivil dumb fun of our childhood. In his own ghoulish way, he is a very generous director. In **DARKMAN**, Raimi's 1990 marriage of **BATMAN** and **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA**, Francis McDormand was transported from the fiery death scene of her lover to his cemetery plot in the blink of an inspired director's eye. It was a transition so economically pure and audacious that it felt like a mutual epiphany for both the audience and the man who conceived it. Raimi described this state of cinematic grace in his interview with Jonathan Ross (on **THE INCREDIBLY STRANGE FILM SHOW**) when he spoke of a desire to "uplift" his audience. It's an Anglicized but no less perceptive

and compassionate version of Truffaut's declaration, "The only thing I want from a movie is to show the joy of making films."

For all its high-spirited invention, **DARKMAN** was an incomplete artist's statement. Raimi's playful manner was an uneasy contrast to the dour demeanor of his star, Liam Neeson, and it could be said that Raimi has been looking for a proper hero ever since. Ironically, he began to concentrate on scenarios that were increasingly sober in their approach and populated by some very un-heroic people. After the Evil Dead trilogy and the quick-draw-camera-for-hire Western, **THE QUICK AND THE DEAD** (1995), Raimi made **A SIMPLE PLAN** (1998). Raimi's vaulting camera movements are absent from the movie's bleak, wintery *mise en scène*; instead, the film is a precarious leap, a jump into a snow-white, soulless void. Raimi performs a nimble flip into that abyss, digging in his heels and keeping his frenetic camera in check to tell a tragic story. The film is dead serious but the filmmaking is bracingly alive. If the set pieces of **DARKMAN** looked like the term paper of a camera-happy sophomore, **A SIMPLE PLAN** is a master's thesis examining an adder's nest of greed that no

number of camera tracks could navigate with ease. He discovered a different thrill with a stationary camera; it stares into the faces of his characters and manages to break through their icy exteriors. This is a movie about human beings at their worst and it brought out the best in Raimi; three years later, he would get the chance to play every card in his hand.

The characters and landscapes of **A SIMPLE PLAN** are drained of color and the actors lurk at the corners of the frame; it's production design for a human tragedy. In contrast, some of the color schemes in Raimi's **SPIDER-MAN** (2002) make **THE WIZARD OF OZ** look like a wake photographed by Dorathea Lange. There's a preternatural glow on everyone's cheeks and the pragmatic framing of the actors tells us the production design in this movie will not be a window to the soul, but rather a billboard for a comic book panel—which makes the afterglow of this movie all the more surprising. Even with the comic book filagree, **SPIDER-MAN** is, at its best, a startlingly emotional and dark film. Peter Parker is introduced as a lonely teenager and the curtain drops on the moment he becomes a lonely man (super or not). The sallow

They didn't meet in the comics till THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #42, but Mary Jane Watson (Kirstin Dunst) wins Peter Parker's heart in the very first Spider-Man movie.



complexions of **A SIMPLE PLAN** haunt these brightly colored faces.

Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) is a photographer for his high-school paper and it's on a science class field trip that he receives that fateful spider-bite. Overnight, the venom chugs through his veins, transforming the meek teenager into... a meek superhero. The pleasure of this film is in how skillfully Raimi negotiates the conflicts of Parker's newly super-charged persona with the banality of his daily routine; super powers will help him break a bully's back, but they won't buy him the love of the girl next door. The smart screenplay by David Koepp (who scripted the earlier DNA fantasy **JURASSIC PARK**) never forgets Parker's dismal self-image and moves the story toward mythological pop. Parker is ready for a hero's destiny, but he's still taking out the trash in back of his family's tiny home—ripe for Mt. Olympus but stuck in Queens. Who can blame him for feeling doomed?

And is there no happiness in this world? Everyone in the film is mismatched. The father of Parker's best friend is the brilliant scientist, Norman Osborn (Willem Dafoe), the parent that sneering Fate has denied the orphaned Parker. Osborn is a brilliant, intensely dedicated man, but it's not for nothing that his high cheekbones and Sardonicus smile remind us of The Joker without the greasepaint. He may be the father-figure Parker craves, but he's also the evil doppelganger to Parker's alter-ego. A disastrous scientific experiment has given Osborn super-strength and a maniacal desire for revenge. Osborn's personality is split in two but, initially, he's unaware of his other persona; like Laird Cregar in **HANGOVER SQUARE** (1944) he never gets a good night's sleep because his dream-time is spent raising hell. When Osborn blacks out, The Green Goblin comes to life, a yattering demon decked out in shiny green armor whipping up a reign of terror astride a wicked rocket-powered glider. With his guttural, whooping laugh (recalling a mustache-twirling stage villain) and his gonzo intensity, he's the Evil Dead incarnation of Dishonest John—or the Wicked Witch of the West fused with one of her Winged Monkeys.

For the Parker/Osborn storyline to work, the conflict needs to be on equal terms dramatically, but Osborn's conflict with his Goblin side doesn't resonate with nearly the same eloquence as Peter's own struggle and it upsets the balance of the film. In **SPIDER-MAN**, the dual natures of our hero and villain, which should give us four compelling portraits, barely add up to

three. **SPIDER-MAN** is memorable not for the super-heroic battles but for the mortal romance at its core.

At the epicenter of the battleground is Mary Jane Watson (Kirstin Dunst), a ravishing redhead who is literally the girl next door in one of the many rows of tightly huddled houses in Queens. She's also the center of Peter's fantasies and, as embodied by Dunst, we're all standing in that long line behind him. The movie could almost be called **ABOUT A GIRL**; it's her face we see in the first shot of the movie and she remains front-and-center throughout the movie's set-pieces. When MJ takes a spectacular pratfall in the school cafeteria with a tray full of food, Peter plucks her out of mid-air, the food neatly landing on her tray like a juggler's cigar boxes. Raimi films it with the dexterity of that other speedy hero, The Flash, but it's Peter's dumbstruck, lovesick smile as he cradles his loved one that sticks in the memory. Maguire and Dunst's delicate, bitter-sweet performances give the final scene—in which Peter makes his most heartbreaking sacrifice—a soaring emotional charge. Spider-Man spends a lot of time swinging through Manhattan highrises, but the film makes a point of coming back down to earth with the melancholy Peter Parker. In those moments, flying so high and feeling so low, **SPIDER-MAN** finds its lasting sting.

Columbia TriStar's DVDs of **SPIDER-MAN**—it's available in separate Standard and Widescreen (1.83:1) transfers—shoot for a target somewhere between the enthusiastic filmgoer and the obsessive fan and finds its mark. This is a two-disc set; on the first disc is an excellent transfer of the film abetted by two screen-specific audio commentaries, the first with cast and crew including director Raimi, actress Dunst and co-producers Grant Curtis and Laura Ziskin. The second is with the special effects crew, headed by John Dykstra. Sprinkled throughout the DVD are several mini-documentaries called "Web-i-sodes" which can be accessed by clicking on "Spider Sense" in the main menu. "Weaving the Web" is another harmless gimmick that introduces the concept of pop-up factoids to the disc; when accessed, most scenes in the film are adorned with a graphic and a bit of info about that scene. Rounding out the extras on Disc One are music videos and trailers.


Disc Two is divided in two sections. The first, titled "The Web of Spider-Man," chronicles the history of the character in comics. The most successful feature in this section, "Spider-Man: The Mythology of the 21st Century" is a terrific 25m mini-documentary on the birth of Spider-Man



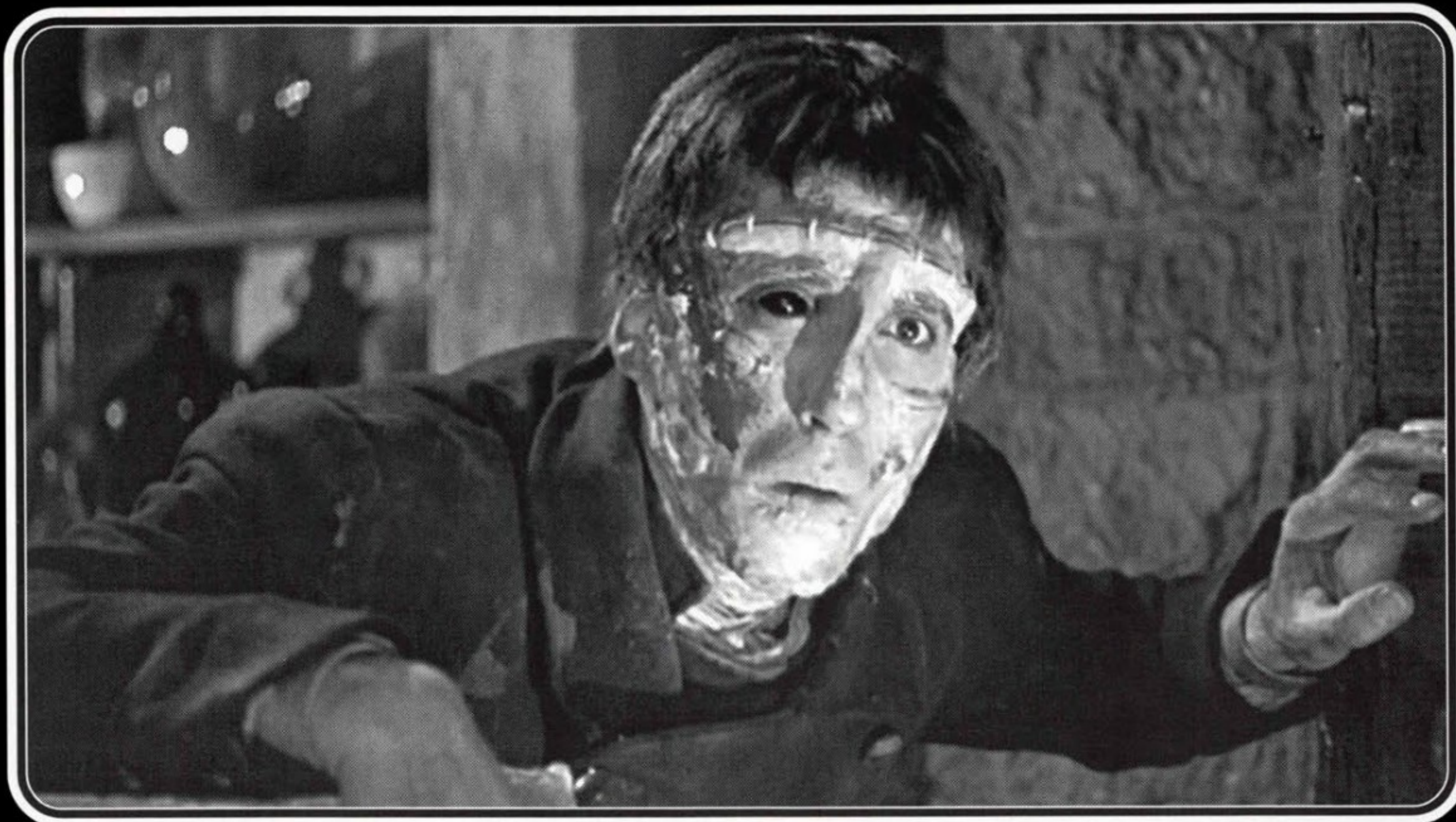
Your Friendly Neighborhood Webslinger under attack by The Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe)—but how to defeat his roommate's father without revealing his secret identity?

with comments from most of the major creative players, writer Stan Lee and artists John Byrne, John Romita, Sr., John Romita, Jr., Erik Larsen and Todd McFarlane. The reclusive Steve Ditko, is, not surprisingly, missing from the interviews, but it would be interesting to know Ditko's reaction to his creation's journey as it is related in this documentary—and I would hope that he enjoys John Romita, Jr.'s work on the current SPIDER-MAN comic as much as I do. Romita, Jr. has a sense of composition that is as unpredictable as Ditko's, but his precise line-work grounds his action scenes even as the characters fly all over the place. Romita's work has assimilated the powerful, stoic classicism of his father (who replaced Ditko as the book's artist in THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #39, one of its most unforgettable issues) and retained the eccentricities of Ditko; he might be the best artist Spider-Man ever had. The "Spider-Man Archives" is a decade-by-decade slideshow of prominent covers with a succinct plotline, but one wishes that all the covers from each decade were present to make it truly complete. "The Artists Gallery" consists of unsigned pre-production artwork for the film and "The Rogue's Gallery" is a bio of Spidey's most popular villains

illustrated with a single spinning 3-D graphic. "The Loves of Peter Parker" (short slide-shows featuring Parker's girlfriends) completes these last three, insubstantial extras. Also included in this section are DVD-ROM extras for your PC (but not my Mac) and Activision game tips.

The second part of Disc Two is headlined, "Goblin's Lair," and it focuses on the making of the movie. After the abundant and thoughtful approach taken by the "Web" section, the bulk of these extras seem to have been assembled by Sloth-Man. The longest segments—the HBO special "The Making of SPIDER-MAN" and an E! Entertainment segment called "Spider-Mania"—can only be described as re-runs. There are two short profiles of Sam Raimi and Danny Elfman at "work," which are enjoyable fluff (they seem like swell Joes). The remainder of this side is a short string of gag outtakes and, finally, what might be the most memorable of these movie-related extras: the screen tests. We are presented several costuming tests and the good humor and tenderness that comes through in the group portraits of Maguire with Cliff Robertson and Rosemary Harris remind us of the heart and soul that was the *real* making of **SPIDER-MAN**. 

DVDs



Christopher Lee as the pathetic patchwork creation in Hammer's revolutionary and colorful THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN.

THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN

1957, Warner Home Video, DD-2.0/MA/16:9/LB/ST, \$19.98, 83m 5s, DVD-1

HORROR OF DRACULA

aka **DRACULA**

1958, Warner Home Video, DD-2.0/16:9/LB/ST, \$19.98, 81m 26s, DVD-1

By **Kim Newman**

We last reviewed these cornerstones of Hammer horror [VW 20:67, 21:69] on Japanese laserdisc. Both have, of course, been available in various versions on VHS and LD in America, Britain and around the world, and

are doubtless familiar to anyone reading this from theatrical revivals, frequent television screenings and an entire library of critical interpretation and historical scholarship. These are films you don't have a position on, but a relationship with.

In reviewing **THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** on laser, Tim Lucas stated that his fondness for the film had "dissipated considerably over the last decade or so" but was restored by that edition. One's feelings for Terence Fisher's reinventions of the key texts of the horror film are affected by the specifics of each new release, but are also influenced by other factors—the familiarity

not only of the films themselves, but of their sequels and imitations; the way that elements of the genre, which originate here, have become so prevalent that innovations seem old hat.

Few horror films are as beloved as this pair and few have been more eagerly awaited on DVD. Given that Anchor Bay discs exist of their worst sequels (**SCARS OF DRACULA** and **HORROR OF FRANKENSTEIN**), packed with extras, there has understandably been disappointment that Warner Home Video should opt for frill-free packages along the lines of their earlier disc of **THE MUMMY** (1959; reviewed VW 86:58). Symptomatic of the lack of care

taken with these titles is the lame tagline ("Christopher Lee's *fang-tastic*, first-ever performance as the Lord of the Undead!") and misplaced stills of Stephanie Beacham from **DRACULA AD 1972** on the **HORROR OF DRACULA** keepcase, and another of Peter Cushing and Yvonne Furneaux from **THE MUMMY** on the packaging of **THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN!** Even the ubiquitous Christopher Lee, who contributes a featurette interview and a dramatic reading to MGM's new disc of Hammer's **THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES** (1958), is absent—though one of the surprises of rewatching the films is how brief his appearances are in both of the films that sealed his reputation as a horror star. Lee gets more screen time as a stooge in **BASKERVILLES** than as the monster macguffin brought to life 50m into **CURSE** or as the Count who has no dialogue after the first reel of **DRACULA**.

It is fruitless to complain about what these discs are not, when there is still much to be said about what they are. Paradoxically, the differences between the Warner Hammer and the Anchor Bay Hammer indicates the difference in status between the titles the companies are releasing: **THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** and **HORROR OF DRACULA** have cachet enough to stand alone as mainstream titles, obviously essential to any broad-based movie library, while the copy-of-a-copy sequels can only cling to cultishness and need the *accoutrements* of pitched-to-the-fans special editions to attract any interest. To play to a non-specialist viewer, the Warner releases need only the qualities and extras expected of the DVD medium. Both titles boast probably the best-looking (if not framed) transfers the films have had since

their original theatrical engagements. Matted in a widescreen format enhanced for 16:9 viewing, they both have fine-sounding mono tracks (**FRANKENSTEIN** has an optional French track, as well), optional subtitles (English, French, Spanish, Portuguese), skimpy background notes and an original theatrical trailer.

The major beneficiaries of presentation of these films in DVD format are director Terence Fisher, cinematographer Jack Asher, production designer Bernard Robinson, stars Cushing and Lee, make-up man Phil Leakey and a handful of very valuable comedy bit-players. Those whose reputations are liable to slide a notch include screenwriter Jimmy Sangster (the immediate sequels, **THE REVENGE OF FRANKENSTEIN** and **THE BRIDES OF DRACULA**, where Sangster's work is augmented by others credited and uncredited, feel a lot less like first drafts than his efforts here), stuffy leading men Robert Urquhart and Michael Gough and whichever nameless Warners functionary overmatted **HORROR OF DRACULA** for 16:9 (the last Warner UK video release more sensibly opted for 14:9—closer to 1.66:1). Because overly tight-framing irritatingly slices off the tops of many heads like so many breakfast eggs, **DRACULA** is the less-pleasing of the two discs. In an unscientific experiment, I looked at a random 5m of the film and found *thirteen* shots where the misframing severely or mildly compromised the compositions, as opposed to seven which seemed okay. **CURSE** is also presented in 16:9, but the framing is never a problem, suggesting that the film was composed for more severe theatrical matting, or that Robinson allowed more headroom and Asher didn't get quite as close to the

actors; it may also be that many shots are more obviously suited to horizontal composition, as two scientists stand over a creature laid out on a table.

Robinson and Asher give the films different design and color schemes, though both contrast chintzy, cozy domestic spaces with more bizarre environments (the laboratory, the castle) associated with the title menaces. **CURSE** looks so good on DVD that, for the first time in any home entertainment medium, it is possible to see that the titles play against swirling red smoke rather than a solid background. Throughout, one is almost distracted from the storyline by details highlighted in the transfer: the nap on Urquhart's burnt orange top hat, the distressing of Cushing's lab-clothes (his famous gesture of wiping bloody fingers on his lapel is emphasized by the fact that there's already a stain there, suggesting this is a habit, not a one-off), pinkish or turquoise solutions bubbling away in laboratory retorts, Hazel Court's powdered shoulders and décolletage, the trickling damp on the wall of the prison cell. Hammer's first horror in color, **CURSE** relishes the chance to show off many shades of Eastmancolor, but **DRACULA** has a more considered palette, as displayed by its startling opening: blood-red titles over grey-blue castle and crypt views, with scarlet gore splashing on the nameplate on Dracula's catafalque as a punchline without narrative excuse. The castle scenes are aptly chill and desolate, but the warmer spaces later invaded by the Count suggest Asher was taking a cue from the title of an earlier Hammer film by Fisher: **BLOOD ORANGE**.

To avoid legal entanglements with Universal (whose American copyright on one-word



*The shot that stopped—and then accelerated—young hearts around the world:
Christopher Lee's library entrance in HORROR OF DRACULA.*

title versions of these stories prompted the transatlantic retelling of **DRACULA**), **CURSE** prominently bills itself as “based on the classic story by Mary W. Shelley.” The brief for these films was to establish clear blue water between their takes and those of the Universal cycle, though elements from the earlier movie versions filter through in disguise: the criminal brain slipped in by a clumsy minion in James Whale’s film becomes a genius brain ruined by a recalcitrant minion (the novel has no truck with brains). Sangster adopts something very much like Universal’s approach: taking key plot elements from the books and essentially developing a fresh story, reinterpreting the main characters to suit the cast and the approach. In both films, Cushing plays a ruthless and single-minded protagonist, the evil Baron Victor Frankenstein and the good Dr Van Helsing, hindered and nagged throughout by characters supposed to

be the films’ conventional heroes. Paul Krempe (Urquhart) and Arthur Holmwood (Gough) come across as dreary wet blankets and are constantly bungling situations to make things worse, as when Paul struggles with Victor over the genius brain obtained by murder and smashes it, thus ensuring the monstrosity of the monster, or when Arthur refuses to let Van Helsing use his vampirized sister Lucy (Carol Marsh) to track the Count to his lair and thus endangers his own wife Mina (Melissa Stribling). It doesn’t help that both actors are well off-form, with Gough in particular giving murderously bad line readings that seem to make Cushing visibly impatient.

The trick of building a story around Cushing’s often-frustrated desires works so well in **THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** that it is repeated in **DRACULA**, where it makes for a radical and somewhat odd rethink of the material. **CURSE** is the story of Victor’s quest to make a creature

and then improve his results, becoming more unethical as he fixates on his goal and then more desperate as the project falls apart. Likewise, Hammer’s **DRACULA** is the story of Van Helsing’s determination to end the monster’s reign of terror despite the unreliability of everyone he enlists in his crusade. In most versions of Stoker, the plot motor is the lust for blood which leads Dracula to leave his castle in search of fresh prey; here, Lee’s Count is someone who wants his library catalogued, though no reason is ever given why the vampire would even be interested. Jonathan Harker (John Van Eyssen) comes to the castle as an agent of Van Helsing, plotting to assassinate his host (though he seems ill-prepared and blunders swiftly to his death). The Count’s actions in the remainder of the film are motivated by revenge, not for the temerity of Van Helsing but for Harker’s staking of his vampire companion (Valerie Gaunt), which is why

he goes after Harker's fiancée and sister-in-law. The approach puts the Count on the back-foot as a villain: undoubtedly evil, he is also someone whose open hospitality is sorely abused by an employee, treated as a guest, who is actually out to kill him. Only the warmth Cushing shows in scenes with victims makes Van Helsing a hero, just as Victor's whiny petulance when thwarted or terrified makes him a villain.

Sometimes, Sangster's plotting or dialogue is just plain sloppy. The structure of **CURSE** is that Victor is trying to talk his way out of the guillotine, to which he has been condemned for the monster's murders; but, in the course of his confession, he freely admits to complicity in one of the deaths (Valerie Gaunt's blackmailing pregnant maid Justine) and coldly committing a murder (of the genius brain donor) he has otherwise got away with! **DRACULA** has many implausibilities, like the preponderance of British names in a middle European community and the uppercrust Holmwoods treating a housekeeper's child as an equal, not to mention simple flubs like characters addressing the vampire-hunter as "Doctor Helsing" or (in what was almost certainly a Cushing-improvised line) Van Helsing cheering up a child by bundling her up in a fur-collared coat and telling her that she looks like a teddy bear (in 1885, mind you—well before Teddy Roosevelt gave rise to the term). Consistently, the films overcome limitations through Fisher's staging of both action and dialogue scenes and through strong lead or cameo performances. A rarely-mentioned moment for which director, writer and actor deserve credit comes late in **CURSE** as Victor reveals

his lately operated-on Creature to the appalled Paul, and Lee's hideous monster shows a pathetic flinch of vanity, turning his head to conceal a fresh scar and shaven patch of scalp. This is the heart of the Hammer approach: shocking grue, made human by a surprising touch.

The films are more complete than in previous releases, with often-trimmed moments (disembodied eyeballs, blood-spurting stakings) in place—though there's still no trace of the mythical gore footage supposedly added for the Japanese market. Region 2 releases are identical with the American versions, down to the use of a **DRACULA** print bearing the American release title. On both sides of the Atlantic, Warner offer the two films (along with **THE MUMMY**) in box sets, entitled **HAMMER HORROR ORIGINALS** in the UK (£29.99) and **3 HAMMER HORROR CLASSICS—SPECIAL COLLECTORS SET!** in the US (\$54.92).

FUEGO / THE FEMALE

Fuego / Setenta veces siete
"Fire" / "Seventy Times Seven"
1968/1962, *Something Weird*
Video, DD-1.0/LB/+, \$24.99,
83m 46s/94m 37s, DVD-0
By Richard Harland Smith

Former Miss Argentina Isabel Sarli is the main attraction of this "Sizzling Latin Double Feature" from *Something Weird*. Born Hilda Isabel Gorrindo in 1935, the bodacious beauty queen caught the eye of Argentinean filmmaker Armando Bo, who married her and cast her in 27 feature films. Often referred to as "the Russ Meyer of Argentina," Bo upstaged Meyer by casting himself as Sarli's (considerably older) leading man. Bo was the only actor with whom Sarli would

perform erotic scenes, even serving as a body double for her onscreen sex partners. One of the pair's most incendiary titles is 1968's **FUEGO**, released state-side by Haven International Pictures (who distributed several Bo/Sarli vehicles, including **TROPICAL ECSTASY** and the phonetically-compromised **MUHAIR**, aka *La mujer de mi padre*) with the X rating. In **FUEGO**, Sarli stars as Laura, an aristocratic nympho with a host of lovers, male and female ("I don't know if I'm fickle or wicked"). Hoping to curb her predatory insatiability, Laura agrees to marry industrialist Carlos (Bo). Left alone by her busy husband and taunted by her handmaid-cum-lover Andrea (Alba Mujica), Laura goes stir crazy—finally taking it to the local village to find satisfaction elsewhere, anywhere.

Early in her career, Isabel Sarli was often depicted as a Sophia Loren of the *pampas*, a salt of the earth type in such films as Bo's 1959 village morality tale **Sabaleros** [US: **PUT UP OR SHUT UP**] and Leopoldo Torre Nilsson's desert melodrama **THE FEMALE**, which is paired with **FUEGO** on this disc. By the late 1960s, Sarli was a dozen years past her beauty queen prime and too overfed to pass as a *descamisada*. Bulging out of her minks and sporting false eyelashes the size of mud flaps, Sarli resembles a cross between Russ Meyer vixen Edy Williams and Stefania Stella (the silicone starlet of husband Al Festa's **FATAL FRAMES**). Even while seeming a full decade beyond her 33 years, Sarli is an *ingenue* compared to her co-stars, none of whom are younger than 50. This is not to say that **FUEGO** lacks heat; Bo and his troupe of pensioners contribute several steamy



Isabel Sarli erupts across the screen in husband Armando Bo's study of the heartbreak of nymphomania, FUEGO.

setpieces, perhaps none as jaw-dropping as Laura's lakeside tryst with the "unnatural" Andrea, during which Alba Mujica (a desiccated crone who makes Grayson Hall look like Jerry Hall) seems bent on crawling up into Sarli's uterus. Recalling Dale Boyd's **HOT BLOODED WOMAN** (included as a bonus on SWV's **CONFESSIONS OF A PSYCHO CAT** DVD), **FUEGO** wants to both revel in the male fantasy of nymphomania while also demonizing "sick" women who are oblivious to "the natural enjoyment that a man can give."

If its over-the-hill histrionics and contradictory Catholicism seem like so much cold water on the fire, **FUEGO** should be seen for the beauty of Ricardo Younis' color cinematography. While this full frame transfer is not without its blemishes (particularly around reel changes) and damaged frames (at 52m 30s, where the

camera lingers on Sarli's supine form as Mujica tickles her bared breasts with a feather), the image is sharp and bursting with color. Reds and blues are especially vibrant and location footage (particularly the sequence set in Manhattan, where Laura's quest for a cure gets seriously derailed—check the Times Square marquee boasting a double bill of **INSPECTOR CLOUSEAU** and **THE BIGGEST BUNDLE OF THEM ALL**) gives **FUEGO** an expensive, international feel. The mono sound is serviceable and Argentinean actors actually mouth their English dialogue (although when one support player uses the word "envy," she clearly pronounces it "enby"). The film has been encoded with 12 "sultry sinful scenes," and is accompanied by three trailers in varying degrees of degraded Eastmancolor: two in English (both running 2m 48s) and one

French-language (2m 54s) as **Le Feu Dans Le Peau** ("The Fire Under the Skin").

The co-feature, also starring Isabel Sarli and photographed by Ricardo Younis, was released here in 1968 by Cambist Films as both **THE FEMALE** and **THE FEMALE: SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN** (an allusion to forgiveness, referencing the Book of Matthew). This earthy parable of a young woman (Sarli) who takes up with a sheepherder (**PIXOTE**'s Jardel Filho) attempting to dig a living out of Mexico's arid *pampa fria* was adapted by the director and his novelist wife Beatriz Guido from the writings of Dalmiro Sáenz. Existential in the extreme ("I don't believe in philosophy, but still and all I wonder what it all means") and spare to the point of neorealism, **THE FEMALE** is slow going until the arrival of *desperado* Francisco Rabal (fresh from Buñuel's **Viridiana**), who seduces Sarli and schemes to

ditch her man into his own dry well. The scene in which Rabal crawls like a Gila monster to the side of the bed that his conflicted lover shares with her undemonstrative husband is deliciously perverse, as is the framework story of an older, scar-faced Sarli reflecting on her past as she earns her keep in a bordello. **THE FEMALE** was obviously considered too tame by its distributors, who inserted crude whorehouse vignettes (forcing the director to sign the film as the pseudonymous "Leo Towers"). However saucy at the time, these cutaways are strictly PG, with full nudity kept discreet by the convenient placement of household objects (*à la* the "Austin Powers" films). It would be nice to see a complete cut of **Setenta veces siete**, especially for the performance of Rabal, whose picaresque résumé ranges from collaborations with Luis Buñuel (**Nazarin**, **Viridiana**, **Belle de Jour**) to for-hire work on projects both worthwhile (Michelangelo Antonioni's **L'Eclisse**, Pedro Almodóvar's **Tie Me Up! Tie Me Down!**, Stuart Gordon's recent **Dagon**) and ignoble (Umberto Lenzi's **Nightmare City**). Perhaps best-known now for riding shotgun alongside Roy Scheider in William Friedkin's **Sorcerer**, Rabal died of emphysema in August 2001 at the age of 76.

SWV's transfer of this B&W film has been letterboxed at 1.84:1 and (again, apart from some expected scratches and creases) looks surpassingly fine. The mono English language soundtrack (credited to **THE FLESH EATERS'** Jack Curtis) sounds very nice; again, the Spanish actors mouth their dialogue in English. **THE FEMALE** has been given 12 "Lusty Dusty Displays." The disc's supplements are rounded out by 8

thematically-related trailers, including such Cambist releases as **PUT OUT OR SHUT UP** (2m 59s), **THE PINK PUSSY: WHERE SIN LIVES** (2m 41s), **LOVE HUNGER** (1m 32s) and **THE UNSATISFIED** (2m 41s, letterboxed), as well as for Tad Danielewski's award-winning 1962 adaptation of the Jean-Paul Sartre play **NO EXIT** (2m 12s), starring Viveca Lindfors and photographed in Argentina by Ricardo Lounis. Two B&W "Super Stacked Sexy Short Subjects" consist of "South American S&M Show" (5m 10s), in which a man is given light penance by a leather-clad dominatrix and the infinitely more promising "South American Smoke Den Stripper" (4m 42s), which looks to have been taken from Latin America's response to **REEFER MADNESS**—we'd like to see the rest of this, *por favor*! Something Weird has also thrown in a gallery of sexploitation poster art (representative titles include **WHO DID COCK ROBIN** and **ZERO IN AND SCREAM**), backed by radio spots for such exploitative offerings as Umberto Lenzi's **PARANOIA** and Cirio Santiago's 1973 South America-shot blaxploitation wannabe **SAVAGE!** ("See what he does to stick it to the fuzz!").

GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES

1988, Central Park Media,
DD-2.0/SS/MA/LB/+, \$29.99,
89m 12s, DVD-1

By Shane M. Dallmann

When renowned Japanese author Akiyuki Nosaka penned **GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES**, a semi-autobiographical novel inspired by his childhood experiences during and after the firebombing of his village during World War II, he gave no thought to it being made into a movie—let alone

an animated feature. But for animator Isao Takahara, best known at the time for such children's films as his *anime* adaptations of **ANNE OF GREEN GABLES** and **HEIDI**, and later acclaimed for **LAPUTA: CASTLE IN THE SKY** as well as his contributions to **KIKI'S DELIVERY SERVICE** and **PRINCESS MONONOKE**, there was no other way to approach the material. The resulting production was hailed worldwide as one of the most powerful war films of all time—simultaneously beautiful and devastating. **GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES** now makes its State-side DVD debut in a double-disc special edition, courtesy of Central Park Media.

The story is introduced by the ghost of a 14-year-old boy named Seita, who begins the film by identifying September 21, 1945 as the night he died. As the clean-up men who discover his body dispose of a tin of a popular fruit snack found on his person—but filled only with ashes—Seita's ghost is joined by that of his 4-year-old sister, Setsuko. The two board a train and look back on their short life story. The firebombing of the village of Kobe destroys the home of the siblings and claims the life of their mother (their father is in action as part of the Japanese Navy fleet). While attempting to shield Setsuko from the truth of their mother's death, Seita seeks shelter with his aunt and earns some food by pawning his mother's possessions (much to his sister's distress)—but soon tires of the aunt's relentless scolding regarding his lack of participation in the war effort. Convinced that he can either reach other relatives in Tokyo (though he has no idea where they live) or survive on the funds

remaining in his mother's bank account, Seita escorts Setsuko on an increasingly frustrating and tragic journey through a land ripe with sympathy but almost completely barren of sustenance.

GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES derives its title from the burial mound Setsuko creates for the insects that provided illumination for her and her brother one night in a cave shelter—while revealing to Seita that she knows that her mother is buried, as well. As one might surmise from this, the power of the film lies far more in quiet visual poetry and the beauty of small details (such as Setsuko's adoration of the hard-to-come-by fruit drops) than in graphic depictions of the horrors of war. Such images do exist, however—particularly in Seita's visit to the hospital, where he discovers his mother reduced to a bloody wreck, completely mummified in bandages. (The suggested viewing age of "3 and up" appearing on the DVD packaging is, we hope, a typo.) But while it's clear

that a state of war exists, the narrative deliberately avoids any ruminations on *why* it's taking place. A defiant villager screaming "Long live the Emperor!" during the initial air raid sums up most of the film's political content. Far more to the point is the aunt's declaration that "Our soldiers aren't the only ones who suffer." The sentiment is obvious but timeless, and knowing the outcome of the story from the beginning doesn't make Setsuko's first complaint of an itch on her back any less troubling, or the inevitable conclusion any less heartbreaking—regardless of the viewer's age, race or politics.

Disc One of this set presents **GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES** in anamorphic widescreen (approximately 1:75:1) in both the original Japanese version with English subtitles and in an English-dubbed edition prepared in 1992. Both feature an effective two-channel Dolby Stereo mix, and the image is sharp, clear and colorful. The film has been assigned an

adequate 12 chapters. In addition, the "angle" function on one's remote control allows one to view the corresponding storyboards for the duration of the entire feature. Other than this, the extras on the first disc are limited to trailers for other Central Park Media offerings (not exclusively *anime*) and an ad for the Big Apple *Anime* Fest, as **GRAVE**'s specific supplements are gathered on Disc Two.

This bonus disc begins with a 12m interview with critic Roger Ebert, who responds to an unseen Tom Wayland on the EBERT & ROEPER set. Ebert's observations are quite legitimate: he discusses how animation provides an emotional effect that a live-action adaptation of this same story could never duplicate, and points out how America is never named as an enemy of Japan ("because Japan has had so many enemies" came the response of the creators to his question), among other things. However, this interview would be

The firebombing of their village stuns the youngsters of Kobe in Isao Takahara's moving anime GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES.



more helpful as an inducement for people to seek out the film to begin with than as further education for those who have already seen it—most will have already reached the same conclusions on their own. A subtitled interview with screenwriter/director Takahara (17m 32s) is significantly more illuminating, especially when he describes an intended theme of the film that audiences essentially refused to respond to: the character of Seita, Takahara feels, should have received criticism for his reckless actions in addition to the requisite sympathy. But while it's easy enough to say that Seita should have swallowed his pride and cooperated with his aunt, one still must reluctantly understand the bravado of an adolescent who finds himself suddenly (and violently) left to his own devices. Takahara also describes the audience response when **GRAVE** was released on a double bill with the family favorite **MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO**—those who saw **TOTORO** first tended not to want to sit through **GRAVE** to the end, while those who saw **GRAVE** first were only too happy to cheer up with **TOTORO** afterwards!

On-screen text biographies (set to the film's score) for original author Nosaka and for Takahara are next: Nosaka himself can be seen in an interview clip as part of the Japanese promotional release (6m 35s) that follows. "Production Extras" starts with a 6m featurette on the restoration of the film for DVD, spotlighting the Digital Video Noise Reduction process. Split-screen comparisons of the restored and unrestored image are impressive, but the condition of the Japanese-language trailer is an even better demonstration. A 3m 9s art gallery is included, as is an

interesting 2m 35s look at how the various locations depicted in the film appear in real life today. Nine brief deleted scenes and an assortment of single shots are recreated via storyboard—this is an attractive option, but each selection must be chosen individually from the menu, and each comes with its own end credits acknowledgment. The aforementioned Japanese trailer is the real thing—the corresponding 2m US spot turns out to be nothing more than an ad for this very DVD. And the "Historical Perspective" missing from the film is covered in detail in a 12m 24s interview with Theodore and Haruko Tayo Cook (authors of **JAPAN AT WAR: EMPEROR'S WAR, PEOPLE'S WARS**). While the sound quality is fine throughout both discs, the original recording of this segment was occasionally afflicted with an annoying buzz. Disc Two also contains an assortment of trailers—most, but not all, are repeated from Disc One. DVD-ROM exclusives include the original script, additional storyboards, extra art and cast/production credits.

GRAVE OF THE FIREFLIES is an unforgettable film, well-represented on this set—but you might want to have a copy of **MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO** handy in the meantime. Also available on VHS in dubbed and subtitled editions, also priced at \$29.99.

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

1958, MGM Home Entertainment, DD-2.0/MA/+, \$14.95, 86m 7s, DVD-1

By Kim Newman

We've not reviewed this sumptuous Hammer Film version of the Doyle classic before, but it has been widely available on tape and laserdisc. With this highly-desirable title, which bears

a vintage United Artists logo, MGM Home Entertainment join the growing legion of distributors offering various Hammer films on DVD. While their package might not equal the work Anchor Bay has done with lesser films, this is still a worthy presentation of one of the run of films that created the studio's "house style" in the late 1950s (the packaging—following many print sources, but not the film itself—gets the copyright date wrong by a year). Following **THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN**, **HORROR OF DRACULA** and **THE MUMMY**, this was Hammer's fourth classic horror adaptation to be directed by Terence Fisher and star Peter Cushing, with Christopher Lee in sterling support (not cast as a monster for once, Lee gets a better acting workout than in the other films, as his Sir Henry gets to do pompous boob, genial host, weak-hearted invalid, love-lorn swain, terrified victim and comical foil), though Peter Bryan takes over from Jimmy Sangster as screenwriter. The disc is letterboxed to approximately 1.66:1 but is not enhanced for 16:9 (we recommend the Zoom setting) and afforded 16 chapters, with DD-2.0 mono soundtracks and optional subtitles in English, French (the gallic Peter Cushing soundalike is excellent) and Spanish.

Aside from extremely minor print damage (reel-change cigarette burns are once or twice noticeable), this is a terrific-looking transfer, preserving Jack Asher's smashing Technicolor photography. In the interiors, vivid reds (Sir Hugo's hunting jacket) and blues (the gloom of Baskerville Hall) are striking, with some compositions (Sir Hugo's bloods jeering through a smashed stained-glass window) worthy of



Sherlock Holmes (Peter Cushing) calms Sir Henry Baskerville (Christopher Lee) after a close encounter with a deadly tarantula in Hammer's THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES.

GONE TO EARTH-vintage Powell & Pressburger, while the hominess of 221B Baker St is conveyed with a clutter of warm browns and in such sharpness that you can freeze the frame and enjoy the detailwork of Bernard Robinson's art direction. Cushing's well-known fondness for playing with props is allowed free reign by a wealth of Sherlockian objects; he is introduced half-listening to the legend of the hound while casually solving a chess problem, then punctuates his deductions by lighting his pipe with a coal tonged from an open fire. The fine checks of Holmes's deerstalker and ulster, along with several other tweed jackets, previously resulted in a riot of moiré on tape and disc, but here the dangerous garments are remarkably stable. Exterior scenes show Dartmoor in an autumnal, shrivelled state (odd, since the film is set in June and July), and full glamour treatment

is accorded Marla Landi as a Spanish wild child who has a splendid mad scene at the end. Though freer than almost every other adaptation of the Conan Doyle novel, which irks some purists, I have always found the film's additions (like Miles Malleson as a dotty ecclesiastical entomologist) perfectly in the Doyle spirit. The slight realignment of guilt among the villains also makes for a refreshing surprise in a mystery so often-adapted that its surprises have become all too familiar.

Aside from a B&W trailer, the special features all involve spirited contributions from Christopher Lee, who seems intent on appearing in as many DVD extras as he has films. "Actor's Notebook: Christopher Lee" (13m) covers the making of the film and a warm reminiscence of Peter Cushing, though the ungenerous might note that a comparison of the film itself with Lee's

anecdote about being terrified to have a real tarantula crawl over him suggests a slight exaggeration, in that the spider and Lee's face are never in the same shot (Cushing batters an unmoving model from his shoulder in long-shot, while close-ups have the arachnid crawling over anonymous tweed). Also welcome—and unusual—are Lee's readings of extracts from the opening and closing of the novel over a montage of Sidney Paget's fine STRAND MAGAZINE illustrations: the film omits the book's first chapter, which contains one of Doyle's best Holmes-and-Watson scenes as the detective makes deductions from a walking stick left behind by an absent-minded prospective client, so you are advised to listen to the first of the extracts before watching the movie, then to come back for the second, which provides a perfect epilogue to the story.

THE INCUBUS

1981, Elite Entertainment,
DD-2.0/16:9/LB/+, \$24.95,
92m 15s, DVD-0

By Bill Cooke

Not to be confused with Leslie Stevens' 1966 Esperanto horror film of the same name, **INCUBUS** (not **THE INCUBUS** as the artwork for Elite's DVD claims) is based on a 1978 novel by Ray Russell, who also wrote the novella **SARDONICUS**, which he later adapted into a screenplay for William Castle's **MR. SARDONICUS** (1961). A late entry in the devil-and-possession cycle that was initiated by **ROSEMARY'S BABY** (1964) and given an extra spin by **THE EXORCIST** (1973), this Canadian production adds elements of the body count films that became popular in the wake of **HALLOWEEN** (1978).

The film's disturbingly misogynistic tone is established in the opening scene as a young man (Matt Birman) looks down

upon his sunbathing girlfriend (Mitch Martin) and utters, "You bitch." The young lovers start to play a romantic game of hide-and-seek when an unseen "something" (its presence denoted by the usual subjective camera) emerges from the shadows to brutally rape the girl and kill the boy. This is the first in a series of horrific rape-murders to ravage the fictional town of Galen, a place that Russell described as "the most New Englandish town you've ever seen outside of New England." (The filmmakers generally honor the novel's Victorian-gothic *milieu*, though the coastal Californian setting has been changed to Anyplace, North America.) Sheriff Hank Walden (John Ireland) consoles family members and fends off newspaper editor Laura Kincaid (Kerrie Keane), while Dr. Sam Cordell (John Cassavetes) is given the unenviable task of performing autopsies on the victims. After a museum librarian is violated to

death, Cordell finds an impossibly large amount of sperm inside the corpse; its red tint and aberrant behavior beneath a microscope proves that the attacks, despite their severity, were the work of one biologically improbable man.

With Laura now omnipresent at crime scenes and the morgue, Cordell begins to notice an uncanny resemblance between her and the dead girlfriend who haunts his dreams; he falls in love with the frizzy-haired journalist despite her cold and caustic nature ("I don't want tenderness!"). Meanwhile, Tim Galen (Duncan McIntosh), a young man descended from a witch, is suffering from recurring nightmares in which a faceless woman is being tortured by hooded inquisitors while something pounds incessantly on a metal door. His adoptive grandmother (Helen Hughes) is the last of the Galens, a professed family of witch hunters; she tells Tim not to worry, even though her worried looks

John Cassavetes' investigation into a series of rape-murders follows a trail of red sperm to the titular monster (Dirk McLean) of THE INCUBUS.



tell otherwise. Retiring to the attic, Mrs. Galen leafs through the yellowed pages of an old book on witchcraft, while Tim seeks the help of Dr. Cordell's daughter Jenny (Erin Flannery), confessing that he must be the rapist—after all, every time he has the dream, another woman dies. Jenny confides in her father, who doesn't need a lot of convincing that a supernatural agent is at work. Gathering everyone together at the museum's torture chamber exhibit, Dr. Cordell attempts to get to the bottom of Tim's dreams. Reading from the museum's copy of the *ARTES PERDITAE*, they learn of the incubus—a demonic spirit that materializes in dreams, serves both men and women, and is driven by an insatiable desire to procreate. Later, at Dr. Cordell's house, Tim is seized by another of his visions and starts acting possessed. The woman of his dreams now has a face, and the dreadful thing on the other side of the door is finally breaking through.

This was never a popular film—no doubt due to its brutality toward women—though it is rather reserved in comparison to the novel. In an attempt to dilute the original work, screenwriter George Franklin adds a couple of men to the Incubus's victims list, and the novel's graphic discourse on the monster's phallus (the size of an adult male's arm) isn't even broached. Nevertheless, director John Hough (**TWINS OF EVIL**, **THE LEGEND OF HELL HOUSE**) makes the best of his Ontario locations and sustains a dream-like atmosphere through wide-angle lens shots, canted camera angles and a few artful scene transitions. With a muted color palette and a number of outdoor

scenes set to gray skies over autumnal decay, this is the kind of film that makes one want to grab a blanket or sweater. Adding to the chilly atmosphere, all of the main characters are, at some point, seen as tiny figures at the ends of halls, at the top of staircases, etc. By framing characters in the middle of imposing gothic architectural traps, Hough visually expresses their feelings of isolation and helplessness against encroaching arcane forces.

The problem with **INCUBUS** is that the filmmakers play it too safe; it just isn't shocking enough in its horror or dark sexuality to make good on its sensational premise. Perhaps due to budgetary reasons, the filmmakers avoid tackling scenes from the novel that could have translated into excitingly visual set-pieces, including a plan to trap the beast by rounding up all of Galen's women and locking them in a dormitory for a night (talk about the perfect set-up for a third act). Russell's *tour de force* is the Incubus's rape-murder of a teenage girl in the restroom of a movie theater bathroom. The book's setting is a spacious, gothic movie palace, and the attack is intercut with comparatively calm but subtextual scenes from **THE MALTESE FALCON**; Hough stages the rape-murder in the dirty bowels of a seedy grindhouse (the auditorium is cheaply denoted by just a couple of rows of seats), and more obviously cross-cuts to the mock-rituals of a rock concert film. Also, the movie's finale is a slapdash affair, trading in the book's thrilling outdoor chase scene (the demon uses the elements to aid it, calling forth an earthquake and a twister) for a simple culmination of Tim

Galen's dream, in which the Incubus breaks down a door and reveals itself to be a skinny dark man in a monster mask (so unfrighting that the filmmakers don't dare show it for more than a second).

One of this film's strongest assets is its cast, headlined by an effectively weary and baggy-eyed John Cassavetes (**ROSEMARY'S BABY**), who previously acted for John Hough in the thriller **BRASS TARGET** (1978). Cassavetes' role of Dr. Sam Cordell is an amalgam of two characters from the book: Doc Jenkins, a Galen physician ("mid-fifties... tall, gangling, with bristly iron-gray hair and a perpetually ironic expression") and visiting occult archaeologist Julian Trask ("saturninely handsome... cool as a ten-to-one martini... relentless dark eyes"). In the novel, Trask is on the track of the Incubus and must convince the scoffing Jenkins that a supernatural being is responsible for the crimes. Far less dramatic, Franklin's screenplay has no advocate of the uncanny, so Cordell's acceptance of it seems sudden and uncharacteristic for a scientist. Also, Franklin eliminates the doctor's wife and adds a rather surprising incestuous attraction between the middle-aged man and his teenage daughter. The incest conceit is never fully explored; it just hovers in the background enough to make us feel slightly insecure in the presence of the protagonist. The shock ending of the book—revealing the incubus's true human identity as the least likely character—has been retained, though it is executed so hurriedly and without sufficient explanation that you're more likely to groan than gasp.



Roger Watkins wrote, produced, directed and stars in one of the best horror films ever made for \$850: *LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET*.

INCUBUS comes to DVD via Elite Entertainment, and, for some reason, the company feels the need to apologize for its transfer, noting on the keeppcase that "You may notice occasional film grain in certain scenes in this picture." The disclaimer is hardly necessary. Viewed in 16:9 mode, the 1.80:1 image looks just fine. It's not liable to be anyone's demonstration disc, but did anyone really expect it to be? Sharp without excessive edge enhancement, the picture at all times exhibits a fine-grain celluloid look. Blacks are sufficiently deep and motion artifacting is kept at a minimum. Best of all, the transfer faithfully reproduces cinematographer Albert J. Dunk's color palette of autumnal earth tones and pale-green

hospital fluorescents. In contrast, a color-saturated barroom conversation between Cordell and Kincaid bathes the characters' faces in hellish red (not until a second viewing does one understand or appreciate the lighting in this scene) and, despite the inherent problems with red on video, Elite's transfer maintains excellent resolution without smearing. The original mono soundtrack has been given a two-channel mix in which the center channel dominates.

Annoyingly, the Liberty International Entertainment logo that precedes the main menu appears again when you access the disc's only special feature, a full frame theatrical trailer. To confuse matters further, the title on the trailer is **THE INCUBUS**.

LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET

aka **THE FUN HOUSE**

1973/77, Barrel Entertainment, DD-2.0/MA/+, \$34.95, 77m 25s, DVD-0

By John Charles

Few films in the annals of horror have a history quite like this no-budget cult legend from writer/producer/director/star Roger Watkins. Shot MOS on 16mm as *THE CUCKOO CLOCKS OF HELL* for about \$850, the picture was first cut together into a preliminary version running 175m. Watkins and the other actors dubbed-in their dialogue, and musical cues from the Ross-Gaffney post-production studio were dropped in. The director then shortened

the running time by an hour, in the hopes of getting the film screened at Cannes. However, a lawsuit filed by a person briefly associated with the production resulted in a three-year delay, after which time Watkins struck a deal with a company called Cinematic to finally get the movie into theaters. However, these individuals took Watkins' original cut and chopped out an additional 38m, blowing up to 35mm only the footage they wanted and then (apparently) discarding the rest. Evidently feeling that the first half lacked sufficient shock value to hold viewers' attention, the company added flash-forward gore shots from later in the

picture over dialogue scenes in the opening reel. They also proceeded to shoddily re-dub all of the dialogue, utilizing other actors, and tacked on a "square up" voiceover during the final moments that removed any ambiguity about the villains' fate.

Greatly disheartened by these drastic changes (over which he had no say), Watkins washed his hands of the movie and ordered that his name not be used. For reasons unknown, Cinematic went one step further by creating a cast and crew listing consisting *entirely* of fake names. Under the new handle **THE FUN HOUSE**, their truncated 77m version played regionally in the American South, doing

respectable business. The distributor then decided to cash in on Wes Craven's **THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** by appropriating that picture's infamous "It's Only a Movie" ad campaign and adopting the new title **LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET**, the name by which Watkins' movie is best known today.

While a video release often helps to clear up an obscure movie's history, this was not the case with Watkins' film, which debuted on the format, circa 1982. The distributor, a short-lived outfit called Sun Video, proceeded to issue it under both the **FUN HOUSE** and **LAST HOUSE** monikers. If that were not confusing enough, some copies of each

As you watch LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET, just keep repeating to yourself, "It's only a movie within a movie, it's only a movie within a movie..."



edition contained the "complete" 77m version of the picture, while others were missing a 1m 31s gore sequence that was dropped from the theatrical release to secure an "R" rating. Around the same time, the complete cut was issued in Canada as **LAST HOUSE** (the title quite obviously video burned onto a blue screen) by Marquis Video, in an oversized clamshell case that trumpeted the movie's rejection by the Ontario Censor Board. Coming in the early days of home video, the Sun and Marquis tapes were duplicated in small numbers and never very widely stocked. As the picture's cult cachet grew, bootleggers began offering dupes of these versions. Pirates also started hawking an especially bad Venezuelan video release that was burdened by both Spanish subtitles and an incorrect projection speed, the latter prompting claims of it being a "longer uncut version." (Well, it *was* longer...) Cinematic had closed up shop by this point and the few 35mm prints that were struck began to disappear. Unable to locate the negative, Barrel Entertainment utilized what is apparently the last surviving 35mm print (belonging to Canadian collector Mitch Davis) for their transfer. A good amount of digital post-production was required to correct the picture's color (which had turned pink and red) and an attempt was made to heighten the clarity of the images and clean up some of the scratches and speckles. Colors are pale and wear is still very much evident but the transfer (which presents the film in its original 1.33:1 ratio) is a noticeable improvement over previous video releases. In actuality,

most champions of the film believe that **THE LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET** (onscreen title) derives much of its effect from the fact that it is *not* pristine or even up to the technical standards of your average low-budget release, looking little better than the horrific Super 8 movies created by the film's antagonists.

Released after a one year stretch in the pen for drug dealing, small-time pimp/porn filmmaker Terry Hawkins (Watkins, billed as "Steven Morrison") decides that is he ready to give the world "something that nobody ever dreamed of before." He looks up his old buddy, Ken (Ken Fisher/"Dennis Crawford"), a slaughterhouse worker fired for committing bestiality, and cameraman Bill (Bill Schlageter/"Lawrence Bornman"), detailing plans to make some weird movies in a nearby abandoned building. For "actors," they plan to use the Palmers (a pair of upper class deviants who stage S&M shows in their home), fey porn broker Steve Randall (Steve Sweet/"Alex Kregar"), and adult film actress Suzie Knowles (Suzie Neumeyer/"Geraldine Saunders"). As a warm-up for the main attraction, Terry and his followers (who now also include two bored girls looking for new thrills) murder the building's blind caretaker (film historian Paul M. Jensen/"Paul Phillips"), capturing his death on film. However, their first victim's demise is almost a mercy killing compared to what awaits the others.

It is difficult to think of another American film quite like this. Produced completely outside the system by a director who admits to speeding on crystal meth for most of the shoot, **LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET** operates free from the bonds of any moral, civic, or commercial

responsibility. Where other films might pull back, cut away or, at the very least, introduce a positive character, comment, image or humorous aside (however dark), this one simply keeps going down a macabre road with the single-minded determination of a lunatic trying to claw his way through a concrete wall. (The spell is broken only in the final seconds by the aforementioned voiceover.) Similarly, this is not a film with a "point" in the traditional sense, unless one were to try and offer it up as a cinematic screed about the depths of depravity to which human beings are capable of descending. While we will probably never know whether Watkins intended to make some kind of statement in his original cut (although he is happy to discuss what has been lost, Watkins never really elaborates on this in interviews), the 77m fragment that survives teems with such unrelenting ugliness, some viewers will dismiss the movie as lurid junk for mindless gore fans (as was our reaction, upon first encountering it 20 years ago). All of the main characters here have done time or committed some act that mainstream society would find reprehensible (even the blind caretaker is characterized as someone who will happily sell out, if offered "a piece of ass") and the acts of horror and degradation committed here are distinguished not only by their repugnancy but by sheer perversity; in addition to the "traditional" slit throat and a dismembering/disembowelment, a woman in blackface at a party is whipped by a hunchback, Steve is forced to fellate a severed deer's hoof, etc.

Thankfully, amidst all of this overwhelming depravity and seediness is some genuinely admirable craftsmanship.

Although **LAST HOUSE** was produced practically on the fly, the camerawork is not nearly as haphazard as one might expect. Several of the compositions are striking in their use of light and shapes, and Watkins' decision to have the spotlights used by the "production" shining directly at the viewer during the killings heightens the voyeuristic atmosphere. The masks worn by the killers (inspired by the director's love for Georges Franju's **EYES WITHOUT A FACE**) lend a surreal edge to the horror and, by starring in his own film as a maniacal director, Watkins also earns points for anticipating the recursive horror trend of the '90s ("I'm directing this fucking movie!").

Barrel has really gone all-out here with a terrific double disc special edition that covers every aspect of the production, while also supplying some surprising bonuses. An audio commentary features Watkins and the ever-incorrigible Chas Balun (the evil brain behind **DEEP RED** and **THE GORE SCORE**) discussing the picture and its history. Watkins (who turns out to be an intelligent, well-read man with streaks of narcissism and intensity that surface periodically) states from the get-go that he hates watching this version of the movie and may not have anything interesting to say about it. However, Balun quickly puts him at ease and the director clearly enjoys himself throughout much of the talk. In between wry quips ("It's almost Kubrickian in its monolithic simplicity!"), Balun coaxes a number of interesting anecdotes from Watkins about the hardships he endured during and after production. The latter also provides the

real names of the participants and displays genuine pride for some of the set-ups, previously impossible to appreciate due to poor release prints and uncorrected video transfers. The increased clarity also makes the gore more potent (as Balun notes, "this is far bloodier...and the blood is red, too!"). The director (who apprenticed with Freddie Francis, Otto Preminger, and Nicholas Ray) also mentions that his cut opened with a great deal of genuine slaughterhouse footage (only one brief bit survives in this edition) and that some of the Manson Family crimes were in the back of his mind when coming up with the story. It is an informative and entertaining track that does "deflate the myth" somewhat, but fans will find it gratifying nonetheless.

Also included on Disc 1 are the opening and closing title sequences for **THE FUN HOUSE** (taken from the Sun Video release), the theatrical trailer (which only runs 20s, consists entirely of footage from another of Watkins' films, and looks suspiciously like an ancient off-air recording of a TV spot), and "They Dwell Beneath" (4m 51s), a music video for the dreadful heavy metal band, Necrophagia, that includes some clips from **LAST HOUSE**. An especially rare extra is a 1975 appearance by Watkins and Jensen on **THE JOE FRANKLIN SHOW** (9m 40s). The latter was promoting his book **BORIS KARLOFF AND HIS FILMS** and gets the lion's share of the spotlight here, but Watkins does speak about his plans for the picture, none of which came to pass, unfortunately (the bit appears to have been recorded on an ancient U-Matic player, so it is in B&W and features frequent

visual distortion but is likely all that still exists of the program). Watkins and Ken Fisher are heard in a radio interview (54m 36s) from February 1973. The program's host is utterly clueless but the cocksure, not entirely coherent Watkins is amusingly outspoken, saying potentially libelous things about Roman Polanski, Nicholas Ray, Dennis Hopper, and Jean-Luc Godard ("Sloppy, with a minimum of talent"). He also calls **EASY RIDER** "a terrible film," **THE LAST MOVIE** "one of the worst movies ever made," and **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD** "pretty bad." The equally headstrong Fisher, meanwhile, states that the rushes of their project are 20 times better than **THE LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT** ("a piece of junk that's making a fortune"). However, the pair do have some interesting observations about the films and audiences of the day and those who like the movie will find it worthwhile to struggle through the bad recording. Rounding out the disc is a photo gallery (which includes shots of Watkins with the likes of Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing on the sets of **THE SCARS OF DRACULA** and **THE CREEPING FLESH**, plus posters and video box covers) and the existing 16mm outtakes from the film. Running 18m 46s, the silent footage is only moderately interesting but does serve to show how much better the movie looked before it was subjected to its sub-standard 35mm blow-up.

Normally, this bounty would be more than enough to constitute a "Special Edition" but there is still another entire disc of supplementary material to peruse. Four films Watkins made (three in 8mm color and one in 16mm) are included, starting with **MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH**,

which he shot in his parents' basement at age 10. None are presented with the original audio, due to the impossibility of clearing the music used in them. The director does provide commentary over each (and is joined by Balun on *BLACK SNOW*) and we get a glimpse of some themes and images that would crop up in **LAST HOUSE** (a fifth short, *AMPUTEE GRAND PRIX*, had to be dropped at the last minute for legal reasons). "At Home With Terry Hawkins" is a collection of secretly recorded telephone calls (grouped into 40 chapters) Watkins made during the filming that detail the trials and tribulations he faced (everything from trying to secure locations to handling mundane inconveniences like a stalled car), how he dealt with his actors, etc. It is a unique document of the production that is worth the listen.

05-23-88 (27m 32s) is the surviving fragment of an aborted video documentary featuring the absolute worst camerawork you can imagine. Coming off of an ugly divorce and depressed by the fact that he has been forced to work primarily in the porn industry, Watkins is not entirely able to hide his bitterness and sheepishly acknowledges the misogyny that creeps up in his work and his conversations here. Engaging and a bit macabre, he discusses everything from Carson McCullers (and visits her grave) to loneliness to death. Using your "up" arrow on the menu page for 05-23-88 reveals a finger print in the upper right hand corner. Clicking on it provides a look at Watkins and Balun recording the commentary, as well as the former having drinks with David Szulkin (author of *WES CRAVEN'S LAST HOUSE ON THE LEFT: THE MAKING OF A CULT CLASSIC*) and others.

Finally, tucked inside the double keep case (which features



*Tom Cruise and Mia Sara as Jack and Lili, the young lovers in Ridley Scott's newly restored fairy tale, **LEGEND**.*

original cover art by VW contributor Stephen R. Bissette) is an illustrated 34 page booklet in which *HEADPRESS* editor David Kerekes discusses his obsession with the film (which he was not entirely sure even really existed at first) that eventually led him to travel 6000 miles to America and meet with Watkins in person. This is followed by interviews with the director, Ken Fisher, Ken Rouse (who plays the whip-cracking hunchback), Steve Sweet, and Paul M. Jensen that offer additional information and reminiscences. There is little repetition of the materials found on the discs, and the booklet—whose contents also appeared in *HEADPRESS* #23—is an excellent compliment to a lovingly obsessive and highly satisfying release that is sure to increase the profile of a unique, unyielding movie.

LEGEND

1986, Universal Home Video, DD-5.1/DTS-5.1/MA/16:9/LB/ST/CC/+, 113m 19s (Director's Cut); DD-2.0/SS/MA/16:9/LB/ST/CC/+, 89m 22s (Theatrical Version), \$24.98, DVD-1

By Bill Cooke

Once upon a time, in the pages of this magazine [VW 29:30], there was an article by Sean Murphy analyzing the differences between the three available cuts of Ridley Scott's **LEGEND**: the 89m American version with music by Tangerine Dream; a 95m European version that retained the original Jerry Goldsmith score; and an odd television mutation. Now, with the arrival of Universal's long-delayed "Ultimate Edition" DVD, director Scott offers one more variation to the mix—a brand new "director's cut" that

attempts to remedy the damage that has been inflicted on **LEG-
END** since its disastrous test screening in 1985. It still may not be a masterpiece—a lack of incident in the second half ensures that—but with thought-provoking footage and the great Jerry Goldsmith score restored, what was once simply a visually arresting film is now a musically and dramatically affecting work, as well.

Immediately apparent is how the new Director's Cut (henceforth DC) shows an attention to character development that is sadly lacking in the dumbed-down American version (AV elsewhere). Take the early scene that introduces us to main character Lili (Mia Sara): in the AV, she has barely sat down in peasant Nell's cottage before announcing, "I've no time for this; I'm going!" The same scene in the DC runs considerably longer, with Nell (Tina Martin) quoting proverbs ("The willful heart invites despair like blind men creeping in a dragon's lair"), offering advice ("You should be out looking for a handsome young prince on a white charge") and even doling out a little foreshadowing ("Magic is a wonderful thing; you'll find your own magic one day"). As in the previous European version (EV ongoing), Lili's status as a princess is restored (in the AV, she's simply a "Lady"), as well as her rebellious nature ("What my father doesn't know won't trouble him"). The DC continues this development of Lili's deceptive behavior when she meets forest-child Jack (Tom Cruise) and tosses him a bundle of heart-shaped cookies. As he hesitantly nibbles on them (a nice visual metaphor missing on the AV), she proclaims "I made that for you myself" before crumbling

and admitting "Well, I took it from Nell." With these bits reinstated, Lili is distinctly portrayed as a willful, arrogant mischief-maker in need of a classic fairy tale lesson. And, consequently, later events—such as when she refuses to listen to Jack's warning about touching the unicorns and, in the end, when she deceives Darkness—have more impact and meaning.

Jack is a more innocent and hesitant character in the DC, none too happy about being elected a sword-wielding champion by the faeries. In the AV, when Jack faces his first great challenge, the water hag Meg Mucklebones (Robert Picardo), he quickly and heroically disposes of the threat with a blow from his sword. The DC fully restores this sequence to show Jack's fear of taking action against the monster. Instead, he bides his time by flattering the hag and distracting her as he unsheaths his weapon. The DC also incorporates footage seen previously only in the expanded television version, of Jack momentarily losing his grip on the sword.

One of the AV's goals was to make Tom Cruise—fresh from his star turn in **RISKY BUSINESS**—appear less like a "sissy" (in the script he was known as "Jack O' The Green") and more like an action hero-heartthrob. Only to accomplish this, another character had to be sabotaged: Gump (**THE TIN DRUM**'s David Bennent), who—in the EV and DC—is clearly the bandleader that infiltrates Darkness's lair, is, incredibly, busted to Private First Class in the AV. This is accomplished by changing and dropping dialogue, as well as more subtle methods, such as altering the sound mix to lessen the

severity of a snap from Gump's fingers (DC 65:48, AV 50:54), and the removal of a closeup on his knowing smile when Darkness announces, "Sunlight is my destroyer!" (DC 79:27, AV 62:04). Gump's part is expanded in the DC, not only in his first scene where he asks Jack a riddle (for further explanation see VW 29:40), but also in an addendum to the Hell's kitchen sequence. Trapped behind bars, Jack offers, "Spring the lock with your magic, Gump!" After a magical gesture has no effect, Gump sticks his finger in the keyhole and is shocked. "Iron is trouble for elves." In this same scene, Oona (Annabelle Lanyon) enjoys an extra little moment to communicate her jealous rage over Jack's love for Lili. After breaking the heroes out of their jail cell in Hell's kitchen, she slams the door on Jack and seethes, "You! You mortal, you! I could vex you... dance your life away!" Jack, still the reluctant hero, is dumbstruck until his friends return and pull him out of the cell.

Scenes involving Tim Curry's Darkness are only slightly expanded in the DC. His dramatic entrance through the mirror features two additional shots that leave nothing to the imagination, whereas the AV, in a surprisingly subtle turn, takes its time to reveal the demon's face. Darkness's seduction of Lili is a bit longer and edited differently. But it's amazing how much difference an extra "Please" and a slightly longer close-up on a confused face can make in changing the one-dimensional Devil of the AV into a character more closely akin to the sad, sympathetic Beast of Cocteau's **BEAUTY AND THE BEAST** [*Le Belle et la Bête*,



Gump (David Bennent) and Blix (Alice Playten) help Jack to rescue Lili from the Dark Side.

1946]. The special effects shot of the defeated Darkness spinning off into a star field, which previously graced the AV but not the EV, has been retained for the new DC (101:24).

All of these additions and differences pale, however, next to the DC's ultimate surprise: the restoration of Ridley Scott's original ambiguous ending. In both the AV and EV, Jack retrieves the ring from the lake and slips it on Lili's finger. Little is said between them (in the AV, they just make embarrassing "goo-goo" eyes at one another) before they wave goodbye to the faeries and run hand-in-hand into the sunrise. The DC tells an altogether different story: Lili takes longer to revive while an agonized Jack whispers "I love you, Lili...come back to me." When she finally does open her eyes...

LILI: Jack, was it all a dream?

JACK: You're safe now.

LILI: So many terrible things happened. [Pause] I learned something about myself. And something about you.

JACK: What's that?

LILI: You belong here.
You're my prince.

JACK: I'm only Jack.

LILI: My lord, Jack.

They kiss. LILI pulls off the ring and gives it back to Jack.

LILI: See? You take that, and you keep it. Treasure it. It's part of me.

The awkward moment is broken when LILI laughs.

LILI: Can I come tomorrow?

JACK: Of course. I'll be here. I'll always be here for you, Lili. Will you sing for me?

Lili sings a verse before departing. Jack stands on a rock and waves to her as she disappears into the woods. He turns back toward his woodland home and a bird lands on his shoulder. And in the final shots, Jack is seen running into the sunrise... alone.

The "Happily ever after" endings of all previous versions are insultingly trite compared to this new (actually, very old) ending that dares to make its audience think. We see Lili matured by her ordeal; she has learned that, as a human, she is tainted with an impurity of spirit that can spoil

the magic of the forest (the unicorns) as well as the innocent child of the forest, Jack ("I learned something...about you"). She and Jack are from different worlds ("You belong here") and she realizes now that toying with him (ie., the ring) was a mistake. If their relationship is to continue, it will have to be as it has always been ("Can I come again tomorrow?"). But as she runs off, seeming to return to her girlish self from the story's beginning, we're left wondering... will she remember the lesson? And will she return?

Reportedly, Jack was left weeping in the original cut. No outward signs of sorrow remain in the DV, although there is rather damning evidence that this rumor is well-founded. As Jack stands with his back to the camera, waving goodbye to Lili, Scott inserts a close-up of Jack smiling broadly—which is jarring, because it's obviously culled from an earlier scene. When we return to the master shot, Jack turns around to face the camera and he is not smiling as he was in the close-up—instead he has a rather straight, emotionless look. It's quite possible that, in place

of the mismatching cutaway, there was once a close-up of Jack shedding a tear or two, and perhaps Scott changed his mind when editing the DC, either to reinforce Jack's heroic standing or because the tears would have implied that he was wise to Lili's deceptions. In the DC, Jack must remain, like the unicorns, innocent and untainted by the world outside his forest.

The most legendary controversy surrounding **LEGEND** was the removal of Jerry Goldsmith's score from the American release. In his audio commentary that accompanies the DV, Scott praises Goldsmith's contribution: "Jerry delivered exactly and more what I had originally asked for...[He] was able to walk along the edge of what I call sweetness and drama...and be scary at the same time." The score was composed at the peak of Goldsmith's impressionistic period of the 1980's, a creative boom that included such complex, large-scale works as **POLTERGEIST** (1982), **THE SECRET OF NIMH** (1982) and

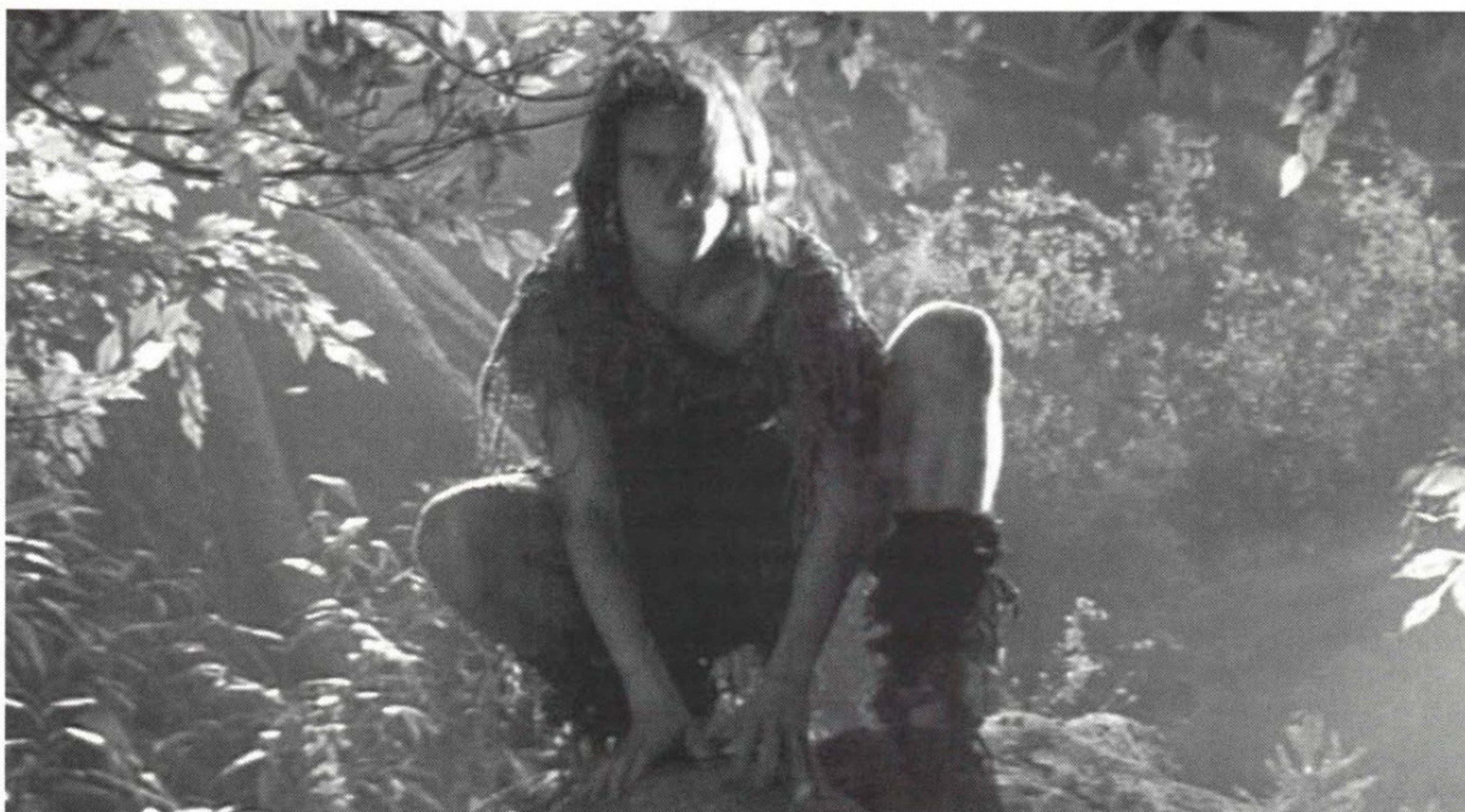
TOTAL RECALL (1990). Taking its inspiration from Maurice Ravel's famous ballet, *Daphnis et Chloe*, Goldsmith's score for **LEGEND** is a monumental work combining symphony orchestra, male and female choruses, and a buzzing array of electronic sounds. While Tangerine Dream was certainly adept at applying a kind of sonic "wallpaper" to the American theatrical version, Goldsmith's lush melodies and choral textures go far beyond such base requirements to define characters and infuse the film with an intoxicating atmosphere of magic and wonder. Scott's fabricated forest is a wondrous site on its own, but wedded to Goldsmith's score, it actually becomes alive.

As is customary with Goldsmith, motifs are formed out of the tones of a primary melody—in this case, Lili's song "My True Love's Eyes." Surprising for Goldsmith, however, is the number of complementary themes: "My True Love's Eyes" is tied to Lili's character and plays double duty as the love theme. Jack receives

not one, but two motives: a major theme that stands for his innocence and his love for Lili, plus a secondary melody that first appears when he finds the armor and speaks of the valiant hero emerging from his ordeals. In addition, there is a radiant, quasi-religious theme for the unicorns, a whistling melody for the little folk (its appearance as a song, "Sing the Wee," was cut from the film), a jig for fiddle that is Gump's signature, and a seductively sliding 3-note motif for the mischievous sprite, Oona. The goblins are characterized by a short, electronically corrupted motif that is startling in its discordance with the other flowing melodies. Played rapidly in succession, the goblin motif becomes galloping action material whenever the villains charge through the forest on horseback. The score is filled with highlights, but two sequences in particular—Jack and Lily's encounter with the unicorns and Lily's *danse macabre* with a living dress—are among the decade's supreme examples of the music/image

Tim Curry as Darkness—another masterpiece of audacious makeup by Rob Bottin.





*Universal's new "Director's Cut" of **LEGEND** is of such high quality, the movie may yet turn up someday on Tom Cruise's resumé.*

amalgam. Interestingly, both sequences find Lili taking on the role of a temptress, and Goldsmith underscores this dark side of her soul with dramatic wails of despair from the chorus. In the case of these key sequences, Scott is mindful to mix the music at a higher level than is normal for modern music-wary filmmakers, and the results, especially when heard on the DV's DTS-5.1 track, are guaranteed to raise goosebumps.

That was the good; now for the bad... Ridley Scott has a reputation for tampering with his scores. As the director, it's certainly his right, but his choices often sabotage the composer's intent, preventing the music from developing as it should. In the case of **ALIEN**, so many cues were rearranged, mixed at nearly inaudible levels or just dropped entirely, that it's a wonder Goldsmith ever agreed to work with the *auteur* again. Because **LEGEND**'s music is such a vital part of the storytelling (with

some cues composed prior to shooting), we find Scott much more faithful to the composer's intentions. However, blots remain even on this remixed DC, the most offensive being those pesky **PSYCHO II** cues imported from the EV as Jack and friends toss giant plates like frisbees in Hell's kitchen. Even though the **PSYCHO** music comes from Goldsmith's canon, the style and orchestration is not of **LEGEND**'s unique fabric; and anyone who is familiar with film music can't help but cringe as Jack looks up a chimney to the strains of Norman Bates' theme. In the scene where Jack first meets Gump and the other faeries, the cue starts off as it should, but quickly degenerates into a patchwork of bits lifted from other parts of the score. Scott decided not to use a cue that Goldsmith recorded for Jack and Company's approach to the Great Tree. This is unfortunate because the piece—lively and filled with humorous takes on

character motives—has a spirit of high adventure that, frankly, the film could really use at this point. The cue can be found on Silva's soundtrack CD (Track 10, 00:00 – 1:52) and syncs up perfectly with the DVD at 52:01.

Other little annoyances persist. Scott insists on endlessly repeating the main title music throughout the film, even though its electronic evocations of bird calls and insect sounds are inappropriate for a blizzard scene or the halls of Darkness's fortress. Also disappointing is the climactic confrontation with the demon (Track 12, "Darkness Fails" on the CD) that features music mixed so low as to sound like a half-tuned-in radio station coming from the house next door. Even the new ending is botched musically, when Scott artificially fades out Goldsmith's music on a dramatic crescendo (104:06), only to awkwardly fade it back in a few seconds later. Adding insult to injury, Scott skips far ahead in the cue,

missing out on some wonderful music that would have commented more directly to the drama. Only by syncing up the cue (CD track 14, "The Ring") to the DVD can we appreciate Goldsmith's use of Jack's motif, sounding quietly desperate, as he agonizes over Lili's side in the moment before her waking. An isolated music track would have given more fans the opportunity to make these discoveries for themselves—this was one of the best features of the **ALIEN** DVD—but we can only assume that the inclusion of a DTS track took priority for space or there was a problem locating the masters.

The DC of **LEGEND** is presented in anamorphic widescreen, letterboxed at a ratio that varies between 2.30 and 2.35:1. Reds appear slightly smeared—most notable in the opening credits and some shots of the red-skinned Darkness—but overall, the image is immaculate and wholly hypnotic, faithfully reproducing the hazy morning-glow of daytime scenes and the extreme light-dark contrasts of Darkness's lair. Instability leapt out only once, in the long shot of Jack's second plunge into the lake. The only substantial supplement accompanying Disc One is a full-length audio commentary with Ridley Scott. The director talks about his influences (Cocteau and Disney mainly, but Max Reinhardt's 1935 **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** and Laurel & Hardy are also mentioned), the problem with faerie stories ("Everything has to be built"), how Lili was originally going to transform into a "Puss N' Boots" were-cat, and the fact that almost all of the effects are in-camera ("Whilst CGI is more efficient, it ain't cheaper by a

long shot...If you can do it for real, do it that way'). Scott offers interesting and amusing stories involving his cast: When an unnamed studio exec heard David Bennent's true German accent, he raved, "He's a Goddamn Nazi! You can't have a Nazi faerie!" And late to a dinner date with Billy Barty, Scott found the former Mustard-Seed of MGM's **A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM** sitting on books and banging his knife on a plate to the consternation of the wait staff. Occasionally we get to hear Scott ruminate on his art: "I find sounds are like energy...things in the air filling the space on the screen is energy."

Disc Two of the "Ultimate Edition" reminds us that with light there is darkness... First up is a full presentation of the hideous 89m American theatrical version in anamorphic widescreen with a similarly variable screen ratio, a less refined DD-2.0 surround track and an optional track isolating Tangerine Dream's replacement score. This latter feature is unfortunate as it sends the wrong message to consumers that the replacement work is worthier of study than Goldsmith's. It's not likely that the AV will spin too many times in VW readers' players, but it *is* the only way to see some weird alternate footage: the bizarre opening that has Darkness seated in his kitchen and lit to look like a glow-in-the-dark Aurora model kit; wine goblets that fill magically by themselves (71:35); the unicorn returning to life in the end; and Jack's and Gump's subterranean encounter with some vicious Pygmies (54:24). Not surprisingly, no real care has been taken with the transfer. It's watchable, but

markedly softer and less colorful than the DC.

Scott Free Productions has assembled an enticing bundle of supplements starting with a 51m documentary with no chapter stops in which Scott reveals that it was not the studio that imposed changes to **LEGEND**, as popularly believed, but the filmmaker himself! After sniffing "pot" in the preview theater and hearing a couple of "sniggerers" in the test audience, Scott "got totally paranoid" and began worrying that the "combination of the score and the visuals was...too sweet. I started to hack away at the movie, and the gentleman at Universal literally tried to physically stop me." The gentleman Scott is referring to may be former Universal exec Sid Sheinberg (the man who went head-to-head with Terry Gilliam over the cutting of **BRAZIL**), who has been accused all these years of demanding the "pop" commercialization of **LEGEND**, but may now turn out to be innocent of all charges. Sheinberg shows up in the documentary for a whopping 20s to claim he doesn't remember *why* there were two scores!

The documentary covers the complete history of the production, from the writing (everyone raves about the first draft; Rob Bottin equates it with **THE LORD OF THE RINGS**) to the terrible fire that swept through the 007 stage at Pinewood Studios and completely destroyed the forest set. Many of the film's key contributors are interviewed: Mia Sara remembers her 17 year-old innocence and crush on Ridley Scott; Alice Playten reveals that her model for goblin Blix was Keith Richards, an idea that carried over to the makeup design; writer William Hjortsberg remembers the time Ridley Scott wanted to turn



Curiously, the final shots of the Director's Cut (left) and the US Theatrical Release (right) noticeably differ. Whether the original shot was digitally altered to remove Mia Sara, or if the new shot represents an alternate take, we do not know.

Jack into a green-skinned "lizard boy"; and Rob Bottin recalls that when he walked the fully made-up Tim Curry onto the "Hell" set, it was "probably the most thrilling moment of my life." Conspicuous absents are Tom Cruise (for obvious reasons) and Jerry Goldsmith (perhaps the old wounds have not yet healed).

Two major set pieces—the original opening and an elaborate "Faerie Dance"—were edited and scored back in 1985, but the elements needed to restore these sequences have since been lost. In a fascinating "Lost Scenes" supplement, all of the surviving material has been assembled to give us an impression of what might have been. The lengthy original opening detailed the goblins' attempt to capture two elusive balls of light. A trap is sprung, but all that's gotten are a few strands of silver hair. Crossing a chasm, a goblin named Tic falls to his death. And after Blix blows into a gigantic horn, Darkness appears as a column of undulating black fabric to identify the hair as a unicorn's. The 10m 34s sequence is presented as a murky video copy of the workprint, complete with occasional "Missing Footage" cards and raw sound (Alice Playten speaks in an unaltered voice; and

everyone has to shout to be heard above the fans). Jerry Goldsmith's music cue (Track 1 of the CD, "Main Title/The Goblins") helps to smooth over the rough presentation, but seems slightly out of sync with the picture.

Sadly, no actual film footage remains of the "Faerie Dance"—a scene that had an angered Gump placing a spell on Jack to force him to dance—but the soundtrack survived and is presented here along with stills and storyboard panels. Those familiar with Goldsmith's slick album version of the dance will be stunned by the raucous original, which pares down the instrumentation to chamber forces and makes for hair-raising accompaniment to the whooping and hollering of the merry (and scary) faerie folk.

In the documentary, Scott is refreshingly candid about the film's weaknesses, including its need for more action sequences. For a taste of what had been planned before budget-reality set in, a "Storyboards" supplement features an elaborate comic-action sequence in which Jack and Company fight a two-headed giant suffering from a tooth ache. Even more intriguing is the storyboard for a different, more imaginative climax: illustrated to resemble Chernabog from **FANTASIA**,

Darkness sprouts wings after being hit by a reflected beam of sunlight, and is about to take off when the unicorn mare charges from behind and drives her horn through his heart!

Odds and ends include: a stills gallery; the American and European trailers, which utilize music from **ALIEN** and play up the film's horrific elements, and a Bryan Ferry music video.

MEN CRY BULLETS

1997, Leo Films, DD-2.0/MA/+, \$19.95, 103m 57s, DVD-1

By Richard Harland Smith

You can tell **MEN CRY BULLETS** wants to be a black comedy because somebody vomits onscreen before the opening credits have finished rolling. You can tell **MEN CRY BULLETS** wants to hoist America on the meathook of its pop iconography, given several ironic reference to Elvis, Marilyn Monroe and John F. Kennedy. You can tell **MEN CRY BULLETS** wants to show audiences the way things really are, so characters say "fuck" a lot. You can tell **MEN CRY BULLETS** wants to be a cult film because its cast of characters is particularized by cross-dressers, midgets, contortionists, worm eaters, clueless senior citizens and

the sort of deranged debutante who would butcher her cousin's pet potbellied pig and serve it up a smile and a honey glaze. Writer-director Tamara Hernandez describes **MEN CRY BULLETS** as a "totally honest and pure" examination of domestic violence, using gender reversal as a metaphor for the symbiosis of co-dependence—and it's a good thing she does, as by just watching **MEN CRY BULLETS**, you'd never be able to tell.

On the stage of a fleabag drag club, transvestite performer Billy (Steven Nelson) has his debut derailed when a fight is instigated by drunken club patron Gloria (Honey Lauren), a self-loathing one-shot novelist with a violent disposition. Confronting Gloria the next day, Billy finds himself enchanted by the deeply wounded young woman, who then forces him into a sexual encounter in a backyard shed. Obsessed rather than repulsed, Billy dedicates himself to Gloria

to the point of dressing like her and submitting to her abuse, both verbal and physical. When Gloria's super-model cousin Lydia (STAR TREK: VOYAGER's Jeri Ryan, in her film debut) comes to stay, Gloria's self-loathing intensifies, urging her toward thoughts of homicide. At first aghast by Gloria's intention ("I'm a drag queen, not a murderer"), Billy's resolve fails him, leading to a conciliatory dinner for three, served with a bottle of poisoned red wine.

In the audio commentary accompanying this DVD from Leo Films, writer-director Tamara Hernandez disavows any influence by such fetishistic filmmakers as Alfred Hitchcock, Russ Meyer, David Lynch and John Waters—yet the influence is there. The doubling of characters, the role reversals, the candied appurtenances of the seedy milieu, the dysfunctional unit melting down during a family gathering—these images and motifs were all familiar, perhaps even

over-familiar, before Hernandez came to them and she fails to make them her own. Unable to reconcile her fetishes with the emotional issues she is trying to work out dramatically, Hernandez illustrates the difference between relating an anecdote and telling a story. The cast of **MEN CRY BULLETS** is largely good and hard-working, but Hernandez pigeonholes her protagonists so deterministically (Billy's essential innocence goes little deeper than his cowboy bedsheets, while Gloria's cracked persona is telegraphed by her penchant for cigars and a cheap Tura Satana wig) that nobody registers as recognizably human. Like a lot of DIY indie films, **MEN CRY BULLETS** oversells its grotesqueries at the cost of its humanity. Late in the film, when Billy's attraction to the bubbly Lydia forces Gloria to assume a masculine persona (which makes her look like Mischa Auer) to actualize her tendency towards violence, it's

Transvestite performer Steven Nelson finds himself looking down the barrel of another gender-bender in MEN CRY BULLETS.





Vadim Prokhorov as Putilov, the weak-willed photographer compelled to provide images for turn-of-the-century porn merchants in *OF FREAKS AND MEN*.

hard to work up much concern for what the result might be.

MEN CRY BULLETS raked in the kudos when it made the festival rounds in 1998. The film even had a limited release through Phaedra Cinema late in 1999 and comes now to DVD through the aegis of Leo Films as a special "Collector's Edition." The film, which looks handsome in a draggletail sort of way (one wonders if Hernandez's art directors were fans of *PEEWEE'S PLAYHOUSE*), is presented letterboxed at 1.33:1. The colors are fairly rich and both image and sound are acceptable. An accompanying audio commentary hosted by Marc Edward Heuck is lackluster (Hernandez answers too many questions with a drawn out "Ummmmm..." and ignores insights in favor of asides along the lines of "Did you see that spit between their lips? It was so gross!"). Supplements include four deleted scenes (totaling 6m 46s), a photo gallery of 32 production

stills and video cover art, a bio for Jeri Ryan (also seen showing up, post-fame, for the film's belated Los Angeles premiere in a 1m 19s snippet), some original audition footage (4m 50s) and interviews (5m 52s) with Hernandez, co-producer Harry Ralston (who gives the film's best performance, as "Mr. Fishnets"), Steve Nelson, and Honey Lauren. The disc has been given 10 chapters, and the keepcase boasts a portion of a favorable blurb from film critic Roger Ebert, with no indication of where he had his thumb.

OF FREAKS AND MEN

1998, Image Entertainment, DD-2.0/LB/ST, \$24.99, 88m 56s, DVD-1

By Rebecca & Sam Umland

The ostensible theme of Russian writer-director Alexei Balabanov's **OF FREAKS AND MEN**—the voracious appetite for pornography in general and the sado-masochistic fetish in

particular, among the Victorian upper classes—is certainly not a new one, either for cinema or letters. The topic of a thriving sexual underworld lurking beneath the surface of respectability in the *fin de siècle* 19th Century has been explored in pioneering works such as Steven Marcus' study, *THE OTHER VICTORIANS* (1964), and in the novel (1969) and film version (1981) of John Fowles' *THE FRENCH LIEUTENANT'S WOMAN*. Yet **OF FREAKS AND MEN** is a pleasant surprise. There is a wealth of ideas contained in the film: the inversion of the predator/prey relationship so often present in films about class; the frank portrayal of child sexual exploitation; the insistence that early sexual experiences can hold a permanent sway over unwilling adults; and, most important, the connection it makes between the technological innovations of photography and the cinema and the encouragement of fetishism.

All of the main characters' lives in turn-of-the-century, pre-revolutionary Russia are interwoven. The sadistic Johann (Sergei Makovetsky)—an uncanny hybrid of **BLUE VELVET**'s sinister Frank Booth and the more comic cinematic icon, Charlie Chaplin—runs a pornographic ring that ultimately determines the fates of all the other characters. Working for him are the weak-willed photographer, Putilov (Vadim Prokhorov), and the simple-minded Viktor Ivanovich (Viktor Sukhorokov), who both loathes and fears Johann. Two upper-class families are portrayed, that of the engineer Radlov (Igor Chibonov) and his nubile daughter, Leeza (Dinara Drukarova), and the family of a physician, Dr. Stasov (Alexander Mezenstev), whose blind wife, Yekaterina Kirillovna (Lika Nevolina) does not love him but stays with the doctor because of her devotion to the Siamese twin boys they have adopted, the good Kolya (Chingiz Tsydendambayev) and his alter-ego twin, Toyla (Alyosha De).

The main link between these two classes is the production and consumption of pornographic images, but each family is also yoked to Johann's world by their servants. The widower, Radlov, employs Grunya (Daria Lesnikova) who has become his surrogate wife and whom he also designates to be a surrogate mother to his young daughter, Leeza. Unbeknownst to him, Grunya is Johann's sister; Radlov is paying Johann to recover an official photograph of Leeza, taken when she was five. Also unbeknownst to Radlov is the fact that his daughter, apparently curious about sex, purchases photographs of women being spanked. Likewise, Dr. Stasov's servant, Daria (Tatiana Polonskaya), is

well-acquainted with Johann's world, too. When the thug, Viktor, delivers some pornographic pictures to her at her employer's home, he becomes obsessed with possessing the Siamese twins (to whom he refers as "freaks") he sees there.

Through a series of machinations on Johann's part, and the poor choices made by the naive Radlov and Stasov, Leeza, Stasov's wife, and his adopted twins fall prey to Johann's ring and the servants who assist him in his designs. The nubile Leeza, the pubescent twins, and Stasov's frigid blind wife (herself a kind of helpless child) are all victimized. Surprisingly, the lower classes prey upon the naïve upper classes and, although Leeza and the Siamese twins eventually break free of Johann's tyranny, they remain victims of his (and Viktor's) corrupting influence on their early lives, which adds a bleak determinism to the film. Putilov, who seems to be genuinely in love with Leeza, fails to "save her," as he repeatedly promises; instead, he first photographs her as she is flogged by Johann's nanny, and then later uses motion picture footage of her flogging to launch his career as a silent film director. Tolya, the Siamese twin who becomes addicted to drink at Viktor's urging, succumbs to alcoholism, even though he and Kolya become famous enough to have their music made into records, while Leeza—who has experienced true love at least once in a tender relationship with Kolya—is nonetheless shown entering a whorehouse, willingly submitting to the flagellation from which she has been ostensibly freed. Even Johann becomes trapped in his own nightmare...

A complex if enigmatic figure, Johann ruthlessly rules his

subterranean realm. He murders two characters in cold blood and oversees the production of pornographic pictures, although it is unclear whether he enjoys consuming it or compelling others to enact it; like the aforementioned Frank Booth, he is apparently sexually dysfunctional, perhaps even impotent. His favorite food is carrots dipped in sour cream (the symbolism is hard to miss), he cannot consummate a relationship with Leeza that he initially pursues, and is inordinately attached to his elderly nanny, whom he casts as the flagellator in his pornotopic cinema. An epileptic, Johann is inordinately dependent upon this nanny, manifesting signs of infantile regression in her presence, much like Frank Booth's fetishized sexual attachment to Dorothy in **BLUE VELVET**. At the end, he enters a theater and sees Putilov's film, the one Johann himself produced and directed, with Leeza being flogged by Johann's now deceased, beloved nanny. It seems absurd that Johann is moved to tears by this, yet his sincerity cannot be doubted, as he fades out of the film on a block of ice that is sure to carry him down the river to his self-imposed doom.

OF FREAKS AND MEN explores, in a rather provocative way, the relationship between the early silent cinema and fetishism, suggesting the way any new technology becomes almost instantly used for exploitative purposes, but also, in turn, promotes the consumption of fetishized images. That one of its central characters is both a photographer and, later, a film director is hardly accidental. Beautifully shot in sepia tones by Sergei Astakhov, the visual ambience contributes much to the film,

as do the frequent intertitles, modeled as they are on silent cinema.

Image's DVD presents the film letterboxed at 1.59:1. The sepia-toned picture is crisp and vivid, with excellent contrasts, and the DD-2.0 is superbly detailed, subtly capturing each footstep on the hard wooden floors and each slight rustle of a skirt. The English subtitles are sharp and easy to read, and a healthy 15 chapter stops have been provided. The disc is without supplements.

SÉANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON

1964, Home Vision

Entertainment, DD-1.0/16:9/LB,
\$29.95, 115m 57s, DVD-1

By Rebecca & Sam Umland

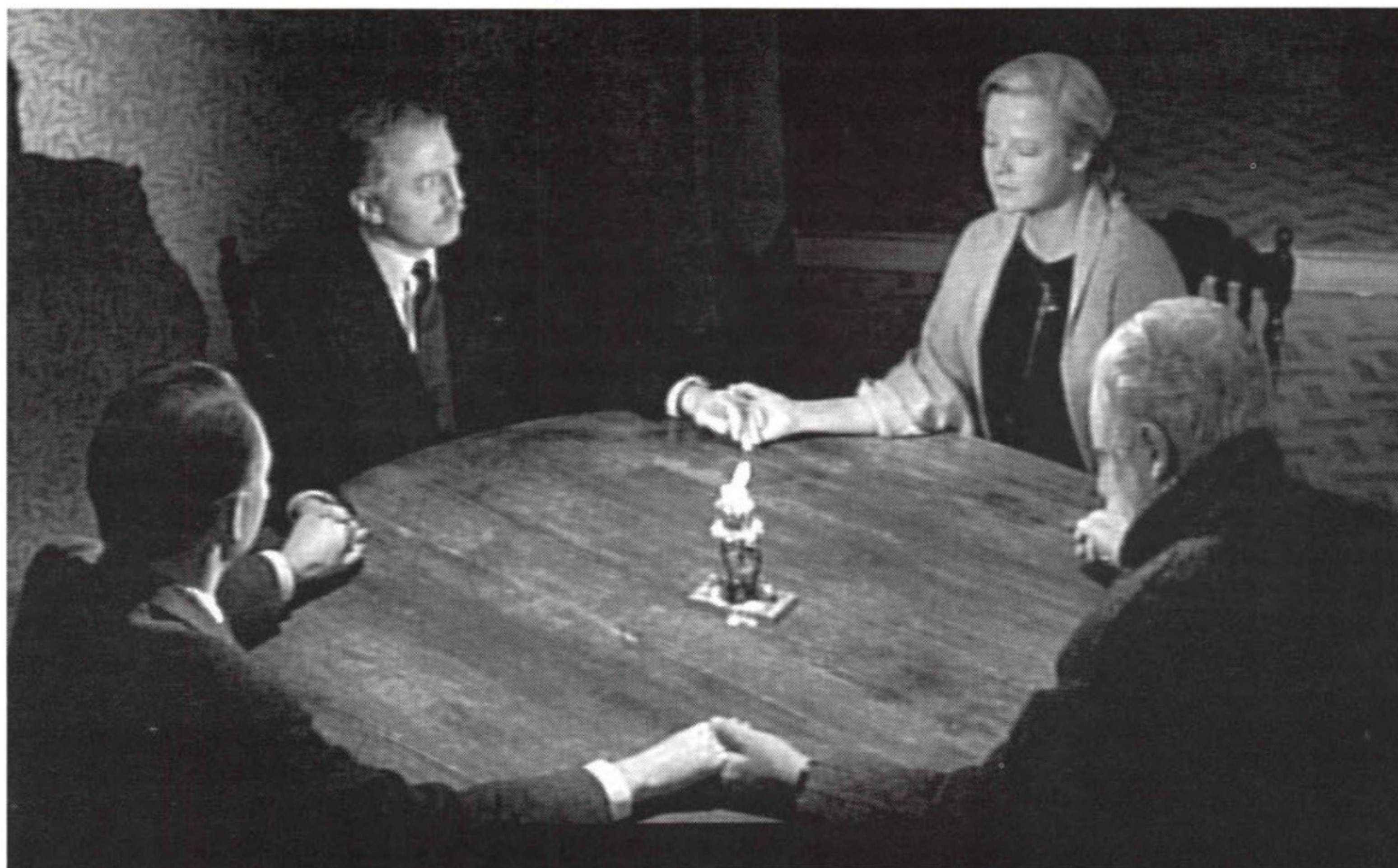
Richard Attenborough produced and starred in this startling portrayal of a sympathetic husband who becomes his mad wife's accomplice in an elaborate

kidnapping scheme. Attenborough plays the middle-aged Billy Savage, while Kim Stanley turns in a remarkable performance as his deranged spouse Myra (a role for which she won a well-deserved "Best Actress" award from the National Board of Review, as well as an Oscar nomination). The film was superbly directed by former character actor Bryan Forbes (1963's **THE L-SHAPED ROOM**) who also wrote the screenplay based on the 1962 novel by Mark McShane.

Myra enlists her husband Billy's aid in kidnapping the 12-year-old daughter of a wealthy couple, the Claytons (convincingly played by **CURSE OF THE CRIMSON ALTAR**'s Mark Eden and Forbes' wife, Nanette Newman). Billy carries out the plan, which involves a ransom of £25,000, which he manages to collect, but the real motive for the kidnapping seems to be Myra's fierce desire to show

the world she is an authentic medium. She holds séances at her home every Wednesday afternoon, but her "gift"—that which she claims separates her from the "ordinary dead" (like her husband)—remains unrecognized. In order for the world to know the "real truth" about her, Myra has orchestrated a scenario in which she assists the Claytons in locating their daughter, Amanda (Judith Donner), whom the Savages have incarcerated in their home, in a room made up to look like a hospital. They tell the child she has a case of "double German measles" and also use sleeping potions to keep her in check. Myra maintains that she has been directed to devise this plot by the spirit of their own dead son, Arthur, and Billy remains inexplicably willing to carry out his wife's orders that he knows to be wrong. Even though

Richard Attenborough and Kim Stanley summon compelling performances in the 1960s sleeper, SEANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON.



Billy successfully collects and hides the ransom money, when the child becomes ill and Myra insists that Arthur wishes to have the girl "join him" in the after-life, Billy knows he has to take a stand against her mad machinations, even though they will lead to his own tragic demise...

What makes **SÉANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON** suspenseful is not whether the couple will be caught in their scheme—a seeming inevitability—but rather why Myra is mad and why Billy has fed her delusions for so many years. Myra belittles him, calling him ordinary, weak, and needy, yet her own insecurities show that, without her husband, her delusional illness would have been her undoing long ago. We wonder what the motive could possibly be for his role as "enabler." Our attention remains focused on the reasons for Myra's diseased mind and Billy's willingness to protect and abet her.

Myra grew up in a wealthy British family. Her mother left her the house in which the couple lives, a spacious 19th-century mansion crammed with ornate antiques. However, Billy's severe asthma prevents him from working, and the meager sum fetched by Myra's weekly séances is not enough to cover the expenses required to maintain the house and the servant (who has been sent on vacation in anticipation of the kidnapping). Apparently, this is why the Savages demand a ransom for the child, since the prime motive is not financial gain, but rather a plot devised to satisfy Myra and her deluded ego. We learn that, when she was a child, Myra's family became convinced she had extraordinary psychic powers. She tells her husband that it was an aunt who

first recognized her abilities, and Myra recalls that, on Sundays during tea time, she was called upon to display her psychic talents. At first she disliked acting the part of child-medium, but soon grew fond of the attention and became half-convinced of her own abilities. Thus, **SÉANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON** captures the late Victorian craze for the occult, especially "spiritualism" and séances. (Even the most celebrated person of the age, Queen Victoria, participated in them.) The other tragedy in Myra's life is the fact that she and Billy had only one child, Arthur, who was stillborn; this is the key to Billy's loyalty to Myra. Obviously very in love with her, his guilt and grief over the dead child compelled him to let Myra's delusions that the child lived and even grew old enough to attend school thrive. This delusion, and the fact that Arthur becomes Myra's alter ego, clearly snowballs, so that Billy must go to great lengths to sustain his wife's growing conviction that she was destined to be a great medium. In the background of Myra's tragedy, then, is the social interest in spiritualism and the occult; at its center is the couple's inability to cope with the death of their infant child.

These themes would emerge again about a decade later in Nicolas Roeg's **DON'T LOOK NOW** (1973). The exploration of such themes might well have been prompted by the Broadway success of Edward Albee's brilliant *WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?* (1962), also about a destructive couple who share a mutual delusion about a dead child. And although history doesn't often provide such uncanny serendipities, **SÉANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON** was

released in the UK soon after the abduction and murder of a child in November 1963 by Brady and Myra [!] Hindley, a couple that would abduct, torture, and murder a small girl two years later, in a case latter known as the "Moors Murders." The Hindley's trial was well publicized in the British press in 1966. Interestingly, **SÉANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON** was followed in 1965 by Otto Preminger's unpleasantly homophobic **BUNNY LAKE IS MISSING**, filmed in the UK and also about a child kidnapping, and featuring a pre-**2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY** Keir Dullea as one of the abductors. In yet another irony, a few years later, Richard Attenborough would portray the infamous British serial killer John Reginald Christie in Richard Fleischer's **10 RILLINGTON PLACE** (1971). Yet in **SÉANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON** he is altogether a more sympathetic character.

HVE's transfer sufficiently captures the gritty B&W location cinematography of Gerry Turpin, as well as his low-key interiors. The 1.70:1 transfer is generally very good, although the first and last reels reveal noticeable print damage in the form of speckles and minor scratches and, in the last reel, some prolonged vertical scratches. The DD-1.0 soundtrack is acceptable, but has little dimensionality, limiting the effectiveness of a moody score by John Barry. The disc has been allotted a sufficient 20 chapter selections, but there are no bonus materials save for useful liner notes by Michael Rabiger included on the interior booklet, making the list price seem a bit steep.



*Leonard Nimoy, William Shatner and DeForest Kelley are reunited in this strangely Sirkian moment from **STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE**.*

STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE: THE DIRECTOR'S EDITION

1979, Paramount Home Video,
DD-5.1/MA/16:9/LB/ST/CC/+,
\$29.98, 136m 18s, DVD-1

By Rebecca & Sam Umland

The vast popularity of the STAR TREK series is virtually inseparable from changes in television economics and developments in cable television since the 1970s. Although the original series was cancelled in early 1969, its popularity grew over the next decade as a result of its popularity in syndication. Later, STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE 9, and other spin-offs played for years on cable channels rather than airing on the national networks. Arguably, **STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE** initiated the now-standard Hollywood practice of evolving a television series into a feature film franchise. Although this practice is sometimes symptomatic of Hollywood's paucity of ideas, it is also indicative of a shift in the assumed artistic priority of one media over the

other: drawing on television programs to develop motion pictures inverts, and hence disrupts, the assumed superiority of film over television.

Critics and fans have frequently observed that **STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE** employs themes that were often explored in the series. Although the screenplay is credited to Harold Livingston and the story to Alan Dean Foster, the original series had (at least) two episodes whose stories seem uncomfortably close to that of the film: "The Changeling," about a damaged but deadly Earth deep space probe which has modified its own programming and is headed for Earth, and "The Doomsday Machine," about an immense ancient weapon that destroyed its makers, altered its mission, and has begun to destroy planets in Federation space. (A variation of this theme would occur yet again in the STAR TREK film series, in 1986's **STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME**.) Both of these stories contain a fundamental SF theme, the fear of technology—in this instance, that of

technology's automatism; the ability of the machine to operate autonomously, long after conscious human control has been relinquished. As such, **ST:TMP** employs a typically SF Frankensteinian theme. In this case, the Voyager space probe returns to Earth in unrecognizable form. Fundamentally altered, it cannot re-establish communication with its (human) makers and hence views the "carbon-based units" on Earth as a threat. Starship Enterprise is sent on a urgent mission to intercept the deadly alien object and prevent a catastrophe.

Its story is therefore typical, both of the STAR TREK series and of science fiction in general. The greater interest, therefore, lies in the reunion of the Enterprise's old shipmates, who have undergone something of a diaspora. The melancholy Captain Kirk (William Shatner) has been reassigned to an unfulfilling administrative post, while irascible Medical Officer McCoy (DeForest Kelley) has gone into retirement. Mr. Spock (Leonard Nimoy) has returned to the planet Vulcan, where he is undergoing Kolinahr,

the ritual purgation of all emotions. Meanwhile, a new crew has been installed on the retrofitted Enterprise, among them Commander Decker (Stephen Collins) and navigator Ilia, a Deltan, known for their exquisite erotic pleasures (the late Persis Khambatta). Old flames until Ilia took the oath of celibacy, she and Decker will prove to be essential in preventing the imminent demise of Earth.

An old saying proves true in the case of **ST:TMP**: it is what it is, take it or leave it. Upon its initial December 1979 release, critical and fan reactions were mixed (Harlan Ellison quickly coined the phrase "STAR TREK: THE MOTIONLESS PICTURE"), though this did not prevent the film from doing quite well at the box-office. As always, its most interesting and endearing character was Mr. Spock, who shows an affinity for the alien superbeing. While there are moments prior to Spock's arrival aboard the Enterprise—largely belonging to Dr. McCoy—his Vulcan presence is essential. The actors in the original series seem as comfortable in their familiar roles as old clothes, and once one admits that **ST:TMP** is what it is, it reveals its modest pleasures, among them the uncanny moment when the presumed alien Other is revealed to be the Same (the Earth probe Voyager), and its conclusion, consisting of a human and machine synthesis that is also simultaneously an orgasmic sexual union, still remains rather audacious.

Paramount's two-disc DVD includes enough supplemental materials to please the aficionado and enough background for the uninitiated. Still, it is

puzzling that Paramount chose not to include the 1979 theatrical cut in the DVD "Director's Edition," as Universal did, recently, with their two-disc edition of Ridley Scott's **LEGEND** (1986). Assuming Paramount does not reverse this decision, then previous issues of the original theatrical cut, last issued in both letterboxed and P&S OOP LDs in 1991 in connection with STAR TREK's 25th Anniversary, will become collector's items. At that time, Paramount issued the first five feature films on LD in a letterboxed box set as well. (Paramount's VHS edition is the "Special Longer Version," running 142m 37s.) The original theatrical cut ran 131m 47s, meaning that the DVD Director's Cut runs 4m 31s longer. However, 1m 22s of this time consists of music restored to the opening overture, "Ilia's Theme," which now plays in its entirety over a star field rather than over black leader in truncated form, as in the theatrical cut. Also, 46s of the additional running time consists of credit scroll for the Director's Edition, meaning that, strictly speaking, the Director's Edition adds 2m 25s of footage to the narrative component of the original theatrical version. The differences consist not only of additional footage, but—because the production was rushed to completion without all the special effects finished—also of footage that has had the visual effects added to them. Other sequences have been shortened and/or re-edited. Fortunately, in the audio commentary, director Robert Wise identifies the cuts and additions, as do special photographic effects director Doug Trumbull and special

photographic effects supervisor John Dykstra (saving us the trouble). Also included on the commentary is composer Jerry Goldsmith and actor Stephen Collins.

In addition to remarks made during the commentary, several of the supplements serve to document the sequences which have had visual effects added to them, as well as scenes that have been shortened or eliminated, all of which are included on the second disc. There are 5m 45s of trims consisting of footage from the 1979 version theatrical version, which have been either shortened or eliminated from the Director's Edition, and approximately 8m of eleven different scenes that were included in the 1983 TV version of the film but omitted from the Director's Cut. Test footage for a deleted sequence (2m 47s) is included, as well. Additional supplements include advertising materials: the 2m 11s teaser trailer (narrated by Orson Welles), the 2m 25s theatrical trailer, the 1m 35s Director's Edition trailer, and eight 30s TV spots, also narrated by Welles.

Three documentaries well worth watching, totalling 56m 44s, are included on the second disc. The interesting PHASE II: THE LOST ENTERPRISE (12m 38s) details Paramount's planned TV series, STAR TREK: PHASE II, which includes costume tests and interviews with actors who auditioned for the series. (PHASE II was scrapped when Paramount's then-head of production, Michael Eisner, opted to make a motion picture instead in reaction to the success of **STAR WARS** (1977). A BOLD NEW ENTERPRISE (29m 39s) is an efficient documentary about the

film's hectic production that also includes extensive comments by Jeffrey Katzenberg, who at the time was assigned to oversee production of what was his first feature film. The third documentary, *REDIRECTING THE FUTURE* (14m 5s), focuses on the making of this DVD "Director's Edition," as CGI artists reveal that they actually went back to the original storyboard drawings in order to develop the new effects; these storyboards are actually included in an "Archives" section, under the headings "Planet Vulcan," "Enterprise Departure," and "V'ger Revealed." Finally, there is 2m 30s promo spot for UPN's new television series, *ENTERPRISE*.

The disc transfer of the film is excellent. Presented at approximately 2.35:1 with 16:9 enhancement, the picture is crisp and the colors both stable and vivid. While the disc includes a serviceable DD-2.0 soundtrack, the soundtrack is also available remixed in DD-5.1, and it is outstanding, with superb separation and detail. Paramount has issued **ST:TMP** individually and also packaged with the other eight feature films as well, in a DVD boxed set at \$269.99 list.

LA VALLÉE

aka *THE VALLEY*
(*OBSCURED BY CLOUDS*)

1972, Home Vision

Entertainment, DD-2.0/16:9/LB,
105m 17s, DVD-1

By *Tim Lucas*

Often bracketed together with Barbet Schroeder's earlier film **MORE** [reviewed VW 73:17], because it too boasts a Pink Floyd soundtrack and soundtrack album, *La Vallée* is a fascinating, quixotic composite of head film and mondo movie. Bulle Ogier (**MAITRESSE**) stars as Vivian, a French woman visiting Papua, New Guinea in search of exotic things to sell at her Paris boutique. She meets Olivier (Michael Gothard), an Englishman—who lives in a mobile commune with another man (Gaetan, played by Jean-Pierre Galfon), two women (**MORGAN THE PIRATE**'s Valérie Lagrange as Hermine, Monique Giraudy as Monique) and a young boy (Jérôme Beauvarlet), the offspring of one of the possible couples in their community—who attracts her with plumage samples from the rare Bird of Paradise, which are under government protection and thus illegal to buy or sell. So great

is her fascination with these rare feathers that Vivian decides to join Olivier's group, without informing her husband, on a two-week journey into an uncharted valley, the last area on earth to go unmapped, as the region is entirely obscured by clouds; it is Gaetan's belief that this geographic question mark is nothing less than Paradise itself—the lost Eden—where Vivian hopes to find a fabulous aviary for the picking. The trek, as one might expect, takes much longer than two weeks and encompasses discoveries of a social, sexual and hallucinogenic nature, including an encounter with the strange hospitalities of the Kombuga tribe, which transform Vivian from an uptight bourgeois, initially afraid to relieve herself in the jungle for fear of snakes, into an adventuress who sheds her fears as well as her materialism. But at what point does self-discovery become the loss of all that one knows?

Just as **MORE** documented how a man could be led into drug addiction and co-dependency by his random attraction to a heroin user, *La Vallée* is another depiction of love as the doorway to alternate, sometimes dangerous,

Bulle Ogier sits out a hallucinogenic trip while nestled in the womb of a very old tree in Barbet Schroeder's LA VALLÉE.



lifestyles. But whereas **MORE** was realistic to the point of entropic monotony, **La Vallée** manages to conjure and sustain an aura of magic realism without really showing us anything that doesn't ordinarily exist somewhere in the real world. Co-scripted by Schroeder and Paul Gégauff (a frequent collaborator of Claude Chabrol, who was stabbed to death by his wife not long after scripting Alain Jessua's **FRANKENSTEIN 90**, 1984), this is above all an absorbing adventure film, on a par with the best of Werner Herzog and John Boorman; it's one of those rare films that give its armchair audience the sensation of having broadened their own scope of experience. Horror and cult movie fans will be impressed to find Michael Gothard (**THE DEVILS**, **SCREAM AND SCREAM AGAIN**) in an uncustomarily straightforward role, and acquitting himself well as the mysterious, surprisingly sensible, but ultimately fatalistic protagonist. He's well-matched by Bulle Ogier, whose personal growth during this odyssey eclipses his own, so that she ultimately regards him a disappointment on par with her abandoned husband, and turns to the more abstract, and possibly mad, Gaetan. Prospective viewers should be warned that the ceremonies among the Kombugas involve the clubbing and slaughter of squealing pigs for their feast (we exercised the right to avert our eyes), but distressing as this is, one doesn't sense—as one usually does in Italian mondo fare—that the footage was staged (or milked) purely for the film's benefit. As the group move farther and farther away from the last outposts of civilization, leaving their jeep for horses,

and eventually abandoning their horses to brave the final ascent on foot, the film betrays our interest at the last minute with an abrupt finale; for the ambiguous final shots to work as well as they could, one feels the need for at least another reel of migration, hunger, hostile elements, and perhaps more moments or facets of doubt.

The 16:9 anamorphic transfer, which was approved by the director and mastered at Resolution, carries a Janus Films logo. Photographed by the late, great Nestor Almendros (**DAYS OF HEAVEN**), who considered this "one of the most exciting and enriching adventures of my career" in his memoir *A MAN WITH A CAMERA*, **La Vallée** was his first experience of shooting in scope. The graininess of the image was caused by his choice of Techniscope (a two-perf widescreen format that must be "blown-up" in projection rather than "unsqueezed"), which he deemed suitable to the film's pseudo-documentary approach. The 2.29:1 transfer has bold, verdant color (reminiscent of Almendros' work on **CLAIRE'S KNEE**) and variable fleshtones; even before he's painted by the Kombugas, Jean-Pierre Galfon looks more than a little yellow—but only in that episode of the film. There is also a single instance of frame rolling, mentioned on the enclosure, which assures us that this flaw is "inherent in the original materials and not a defect of the DVD." Presented in a not particularly deep mono mix that nevertheless responds well to amplification, the dialogue is spoken in French and English (mostly the former, rendered with optional English subtitles) and whatever the Kombugas speak. It would be a

mistake to buy the disc for the sake of the prominently billed Pink Floyd score, as it is mostly limited to brief samplings on car and camp radios and almost completely absent from the film's second half. There are 14 chapter marks, and no extras. Though not mentioned on the attractive outer packaging, the menu enclosure contains a center spread of rambling liner notes by novelist Andrei Codrescu (*THE BLOOD COUNTESS*), which we found neither focused or illuminating (**La Vallée** "plays with camp but doesn't give in to either parody or cartooning"), and somewhat embarrassing in its ragtag referencing of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, David Lee Roth and Timothy Leary, as the writer ponders the reactions to this "60s cultural artifact" of two "20-somethings" of his acquaintance. A film of this integrity deserved more respect.

Imports

GOJIRA, MOSURA, KINGU GHIDORAH: DAIKAJU SOUKOUGEKI

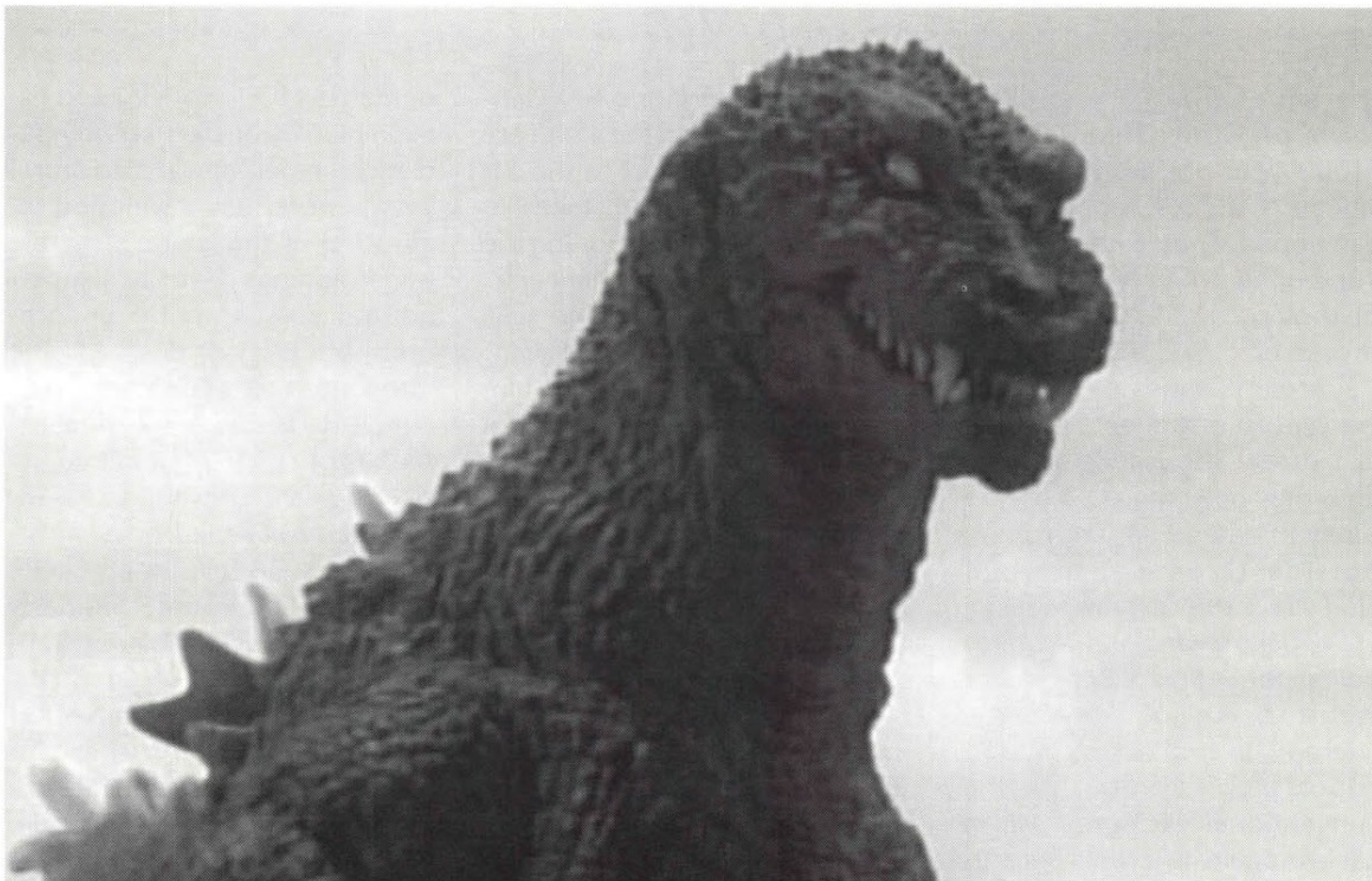
2001, Toho Video #TDV2659D, DD-5.1/MA/16:9/LB/ST/+, ¥10000, 104m 51s, DVD-2

GODZILLA, MOTHRA AND KING GHIDORAH: GIANT MONSTERS ALL-OUT ATTACK

Universe Laser & Video Co. #6308, DD-2.0/SS/MA/LB/ST/CC, \$15.95, 104m 50s, DVD-3

By Bill Cooke

Toho's 25th film to star Japan's King of the Monsters—currently sporting the faithfully translated but cumbersome



The winning smile of the newly redesigned star of GODZILLA, MOTHRA AND KING GHIDORAH: GIANT MONSTERS ALL-OUT ATTACK (GMK).

English title of **GODZILLA, MOTHRA AND KING GHIDORAH: GIANT MONSTERS ALL-OUT ATTACK** (GMK elsewhere)—has been met with more anticipation than usual due to the reputation of its esteemed director, Shusuke Kaneko. After all, it was Kaneko who reinvigorated the *kaiju eiga* with his outstanding, award-winning **Gamera** trilogy for Daiei (1995-1999), all the while spilling his guts to the press that it was his real dream to one day direct a Godzilla picture. Not quite the transcendental experience we were hoping for, **GMK** is occasionally exciting and welcomingly unorthodox, but is marred by an uninspired final act and an annoyingly revisionist attitude toward Toho's *kaiju* mythos.

As with **GODZILLA 2000** [reviewed VW 71:30] and **GODZILLA X MEGAGUIRUS** [VW 82:68], the previous entries in this

consistently inconsistent "Millennium" series, **GMK** is a sequel to the original **Gojira** (1954) that completely disregards events from any of the 23 G-films sandwiched between. When a US nuclear submarine disappears off Guam, a rescue operation scours the ocean bottom and records a fleeting image of an all-too-familiar row of jagged dorsal plates. General Taizo Tachibana (Ryudo Uzaki) of the Japanese Self Defense Force fears that Godzilla may be gearing up for a second raid on Japan. Much to the general's dismay, daughter Yuri (Chiharu Niyama) is a reporter for "BS Digital Q," a disreputable reality-TV show about weird phenomena (surely a nod to Eiji Tsuburaya's pioneering science fiction teleseries, **ULTRA Q**). At the base of Mt. Myoko, Yuri is trying to make a story out of a local monster legend when she's blindsided by a more tangible

event: an earthquake with a resounding roar and an epicenter that is on the move. Later that night, a gang of rowdy teenagers on motorcycles break a stone idol in a forest near Mt. Myoko, and a giant reptilian monster bursts out of the mountainside, destroying a tunnel and burying the kids in the debris. The only witness claims that it was Godzilla, but the culprit is really Baragon, a burrowing quadroped who has been lying low since his cameo appearance in Toho's **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS** [**Kaiju Shoshingeki**, 1969]. Meanwhile, some kids raid a grocery store and are about to use another of the sacred stones to drown a dog ("No witnesses!") when the larval form of Mothra ascends from the depths of Lake Ikeda. Finally, a third stone is defamed in a forest near the Fuji Inland Sea, and the earth splits open to reveal

the slumbering, ice-encased form of King Ghidorah, the "1000 year-old dragon." Convinced that these appearances can't possibly be a coincidence, Yuri bones up on her Japanese mythology and learns that the monsters are actually the "Guardian Deities of Yamato." Not yet fully formed since their last defeat thousands of years ago, they have awakened prematurely to defend Japan from an outside threat. Meanwhile, Godzilla wades ashore, causing the usual mayhem in the metropolitan areas and proving impervious to any of the JSDF's attempts to stop him. A mysterious old prophet informs Yuri that conventional weaponry will be useless against Godzilla because it possesses the souls of countless people who died in the Pacific War ("It's a compound of many people's will to survive!") Godzilla's unstoppable fury is further demonstrated when he meets Baragon and effortlessly defeats the smaller monster by blasting it with his atomic ray. All seems lost until Mothra sheds its cocoon and joins the triple-headed Ghidorah in Tokyo for a final nocturnal showdown with

the King of the Monsters. General Tachibana and the JSDF are there to lend support to the sacred beasts while Yuri takes to the burning streets, reporting the most remarkable story of her life.

Kaneko's intent was to take Godzilla back to his pure "villain" persona of 1954, to make him all-powerful and bereft of any of the comic or heroic enhancements that filmmakers have made to the character during the past 49 years. The suit is a dramatic departure from the last two films: its color has reverted back to grey; the dorsal plates are shaped more traditionally; the arms are smaller; and the overall look is more like a Tyrannosaurus than Godzilla designers have ever before dared, though the legs are even bulkier than usual and end in an unflattering pair of elephant's feet. With enormous, jutting canines, this is the meanest looking Godzilla yet; the white eyes in particular take away any sort of personality other than single-minded rage.

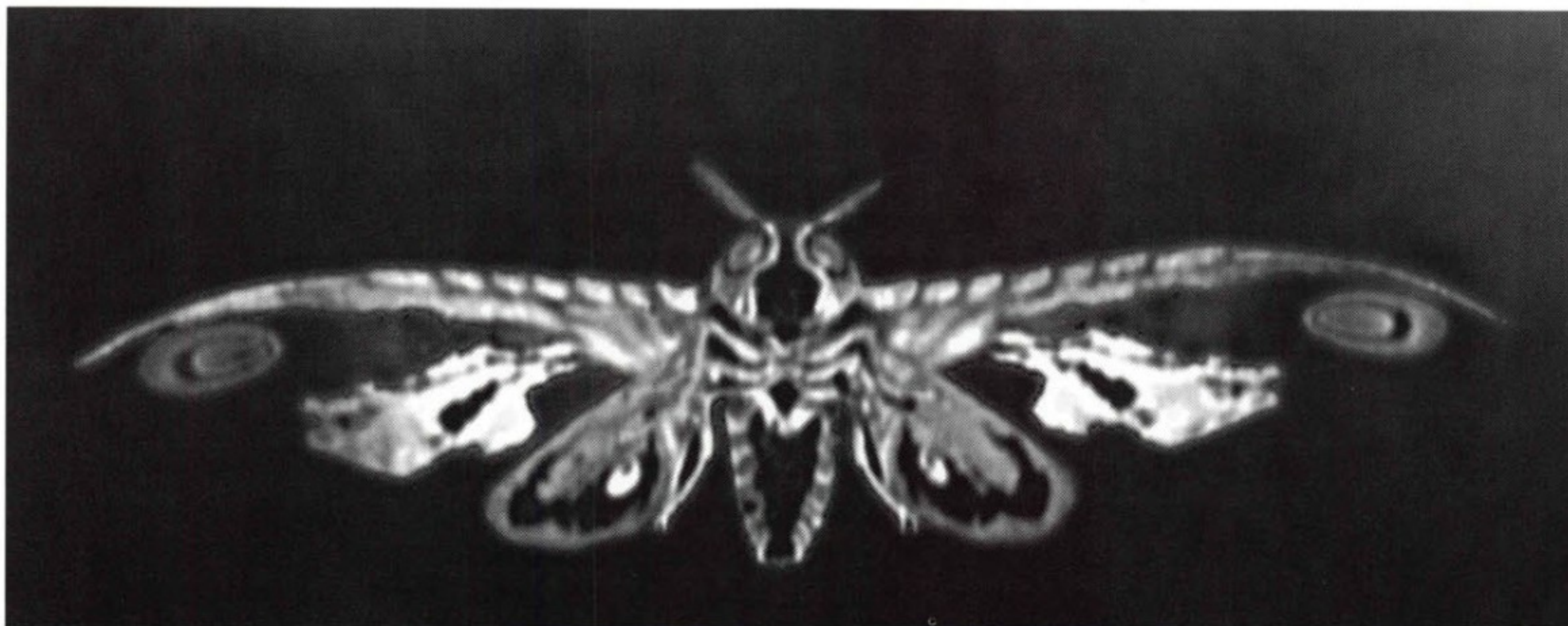
In a continuation of an idea he explored in the marvelous **Gamera 3: Iris Kakusei** [US: **GAMERA 3: THE AWAKENING OF IRYS**, 1998], Kaneko replaces

outdated 1950s concepts to explain giant monsters (atomic radiation, hibernating dinosaurs) with a more fully developed realization of the genre's mythic underpinnings. Kaneko's supernatural slant may be uncommon, but it is not unique to the Toho universe: **GODZILLA VS. MECHAGODZILLA** [*Gojira tai Mekagojira*, 1974] featured the sleeping *kaiju* deity King Seesaw, who was awakened by a priestess to aid Godzilla in his battle with an alien robot. Similarly mystical was **GHIDRAH THE THREE-HEADED MONSTER** [*San Daikaiju Chikyu Saidai no Kessen*, 1964], which involved the prophesied awakening of three monsters (Godzilla, Mothra and Rodan) and their alliance to battle an invading "outside" menace (Ghidorah). **GMK** is practically a remake of Ishiro Honda's 1964 classic, only Godzilla and Ghidorah have reversed roles.

Turning the historically bad King Ghidorah into a good guy is perhaps this film's hardest sell to diehard fans. Originally, Kaneko wanted a different lineup of *kaiju* deities that included the lake-dwelling Varan from

King Ghidorah acts pretty spry for a 1000 year-old dragon in GMK.





Mothra—apparently no longer “Queen Mothra”—takes to the skies once again in GMK.

Daikiju Baran [US: **VARAN THE UNBELIEVABLE**, 1958] and Anguilas, the armadillo-like dinosaur that debuted in **Gojira no Gyakushu** [US: **GIGANTIS THE FIRE MONSTER** aka **GODZILLA RAIDS AGAIN**, 1955], in addition to Baragon; but Toho studio brass insisted that he use the more popular Mothra and Ghidorah. Kaneko makes the best of a bad situation by cleverly turning Ghidorah into an immature version of a Japanese mythological figure, Orichi the eight-headed hydra of Yamato (seen in the Toho production **Yamato Takeru**, 1994).

As in the Gamera films, the direction is briskly paced and the human characters are likable, despite their sketchiness. Godzilla's initial raid on Japan ranks with the series' most outstanding sequences, containing some wonderful examples of Kaneko's visceral approach to staging monster attacks. In one sublime scene, a girl lies helpless in a hospital bed while Godzilla looms ever-larger through her window. Another great moment has Godzilla reacting to a crowd of screaming people by unleashing a blast of atomic fire; only at the moment of discharge, Kaneko cuts to a

classroom miles away to show the reactions of young children and their teacher to an ominously silent mushroom cloud. A life-long fan of Ishiro Honda, Kaneko pays homage to the master several times: an aerial shot of boats paddling out to investigate Mothra's cocoon is directly copied from **Gojira tai Mosura** [US: **GODZILLA VS. THE THING** aka **GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA**, 1964]; and a shot of Baragon shambling against a raging forest fire could almost be an outtake from the fiery finale of **Frankenshutain tai chitei kaiju Baragon** [US: **FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD**, 1965].

Sadly, **GXM** runs out of steam in its second half. The human drama builds to poignancy as General Tachibana stands poised to sacrifice himself in a manner similar to Dr. Serizawa in **Gojira**, but Kaneko pulls back at the last minute for a trite happy ending that also smacks of studio edict. Even more damaging, the big monster brawl of the final act carries none of the invention or excitement of any of the *kaiju* encounters in Kaneko's Gamera films. Part of the blame goes to Toho for only allowing ten months to make an epic like

GXM, compared to Daiei's more reasonable two-year schedule for each Gamera production. But there's more to **GMK**'s failure than slapdash effects work; quite simply, the final battle lacks drama. Since Godzilla is such an unsympathetic beast this time out (even in the original **Gojira**, there was some feeling of pathos in the end) we're asked to identify with the "good" monsters, yet they're not given nearly enough screen time to develop personalities. Mothra, due to her fragility, is vanquished in no time; and Ghidorah—historically the most imposing of Toho's *kaiju*—fails to make any sort of impression. His entrance in the final battle is probably the least dramatic in the genre's history, and the new design (stubby necks, smaller wings, oversized chicken feet) is easily the least impressive of this character's many incarnations. Conversely, Baragon is given more of a dramatic build-up and has the most expressive countenance of the supporting *kaiju*. Ablaze with the emotional undercurrent that the third act entirely lacks, Baragon's early battle with Godzilla is the highpoint of the film.

There are currently two options to acquiring **GMK** on DVD:



FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD alumnus Baragon returns in GMK.

Toho's deluxe 3-disc box set (their first to be packaged in keeppcases) and a movie-only edition from Universe, a Hong Kong-based company. Toho offers a stunning 16:9-enhanced presentation of the film, letterboxed to a ratio of 2.35:1 and accompanied by a room-quaking 5.1 sound mix. Special features include an audio commentary (in Japanese), an excellent two-hour documentary on Disc 2 that interviews Kaneko and other key participants at length (in Japanese), but is supplemented with generous behind-the-scenes footage, including a charming vignette on first-time *kaiju* suit actress Rie Ota. Hired to play Baragon because of her diminutive stature, Ms. Ota is seen donning the suit, mastering the difficult walk required of a *kaiju* quadroped, and performing enthusiastically before the cameras (you can even hear her roaring from inside the suit). Disc 3 offers three more documentaries on the making of the monsters. The longest of these segments (97m) is the most complete account we've ever seen on the creation of a Godzilla suit, from its beginning

as a clay sculpture to the final fitting.

The Region 3 release from Universe lacks 16:9 enhancement, but is struck from a pristine Toho master and looks quite good. Two languages are offered (Cantonese and the original Japanese), both tracks in DD-2.0 sound only. There are no extras with Universe's DVD, not even a trailer, but it is considerably cheaper (\$15.95 at most import venues) and it offers one very attractive feature absent from the Toho release: an English subtitles option. However, since the film works on such an archetypal level, the subtitles aren't as essential as one might think.

Available from Poker Industries (see Sources).

HUMAN LANTERNS

Yun pei dung lung (Cantonese)

Ren pi deng long (Mandarin)

"Human Skin Lanterns"

1982, Intercontinental Video

#611704 (Hong Kong),

DD-2.0/LB/ST/+, \$18.99,

90m 48s, DVD-3

By John Charles

For years now, Hong Kong film fans have awaited the day

when the Shaw Brothers library of classic martial arts, drama, musicals, horror thrillers, crime films, and softcore sex pictures would finally be available on video. A few received official releases in America, Hong Kong, and other parts of Asia, but the vast majority of the company's 800+ productions remained locked away in the SB vaults. Sir Run Run Shaw (still alive and running the popular TVB Network at age 95) has never officially commented on why, but he apparently felt that the library's dollar value would go down, if the pictures were widely circulated on video and television. As a result, Shaw Brothers product (particularly the kung fu pictures) was very widely bootlegged in the West, a situation exacerbated by the fact that the studio did absolutely nothing to stop it. Finally, in the fall of 2001, Celestial Pictures (a HK subsidiary of the Malaysian media conglomerate Usaha Tegas) paid approximately \$62,000,000 for 760 titles (excluding the studio's foreign co-productions like **BLADE RUNNER** and **THE STRANGER AND THE GUNFIGHTER**, and 20 or so titles that were found to have

deteriorated beyond hope) and promised to spend an additional \$15,000,000 on their digital restoration.

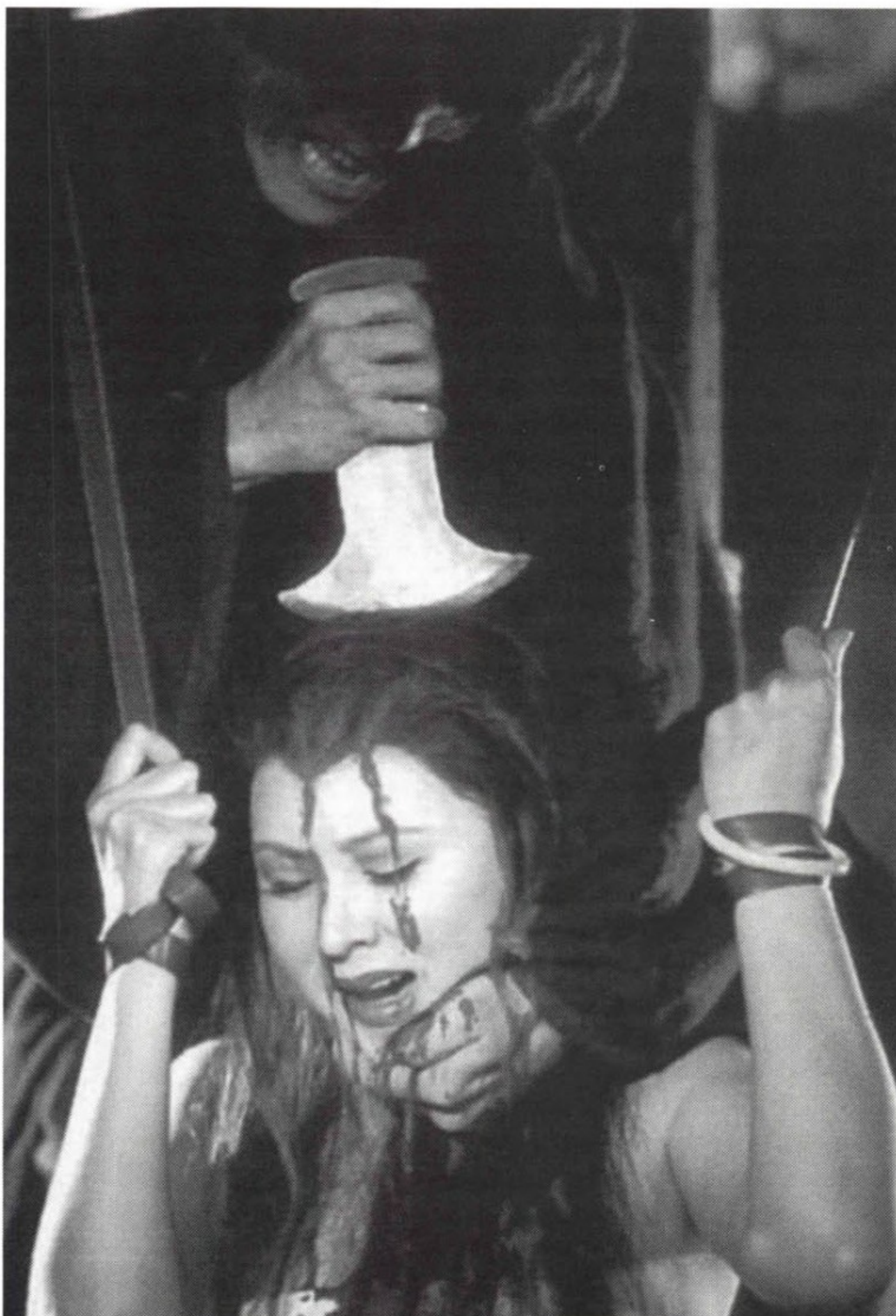
After a year of work, the first releases started appearing (via Intercontinental Video) on HK store shelves in December 2002 and were met with both praise (for the gorgeous, immaculately clean transfers) and criticism (for ill-conceived and executed 5.1 remixes, the lack of 16:9, subtitle problems, hastily prepared extras). Although the discs are all coded for Region 3 only (official US distribution is still pending, as of this writing), the titles released thus far have been disappearing quickly from Chinatown video outlets and internet dealers (VCDs are also available for Region 1 slaves). Their arrival could not have been more timely: with the HK movie industry currently suffering one of its worst artistic declines in memory, the opportunity to finally explore an important chapter of Chinese film history is irresistible. Also enticing is the opportunity to see more of the Shaws' horror thrillers, the first of which to be released on DVD is director Sun Chung's **HUMAN LANTERNS**, which had a badly cropped, heavily censored video release through the Taiwanese label New Ship Enterprises in the 1980s. Celestial's edition turns out to be a mixed blessing: its widescreen presentation is a tremendous improvement, but the source is the same incomplete version as before.

Desperate to best rival Tan Fu (Chen Kuan-tai) in the annual lantern contest, impudent nobleman Lung Shu-ai (Liu Yung) discovers that his usual craftsman is actually not the one responsible for the construction of the exquisite ornaments. The true

designer is Chao Chun-fang (Lo Lieh), a disfigured misanthrope who dwells in a dilapidated mill deep in the woods. Years earlier, the two met in battle and the contest ended with Lung deeply scarring Chao's face. Although he initially spurns the idea of helping his greatest enemy, Chao has a change of heart when Lung impresses upon him the wealth and fame that will result from

victory in the competition. The man does insist on one condition, however: Lung may not visit his home at any time and will be contacted only when the lantern is finished. Lung views the lantern-maker as a benign eccentric, but Chao is actually quite insane, using human skin as raw material, and pledging that "I must have whatever Master Lung has and destroy whatever he

This publicity still for HUMAN LANTERNS, alas, displays more gore than what remains in the print used for Intercontinental's DVD.



owns." Seeing that his adversary is in love with prostitute Yen-chu, Chao dons a mask and gloves that make him look like a simian demon and abducts the woman. Back at the mill, he kills her, peeling the delicate skin from her body. With the police (led by Sun Chien) suspecting Lung (who had a very public quarrel with Yen-chu the night before), Chao proceeds to carry away Tan's teenage sister, effectively setting Tan and Lung at each other's throats. Tan hires a wandering swordsman (Lo Meng) to mutilate his rival and, to stir the pot some more, the incredibly limber Chao ambushes and murders a group of Tan's men, leaving their severed heads hanging in the marketplace. While the two of them continue to point fingers, Chao claims more human epidermis to use for his creations.

This arresting period melodrama unfolds largely amidst the usual gorgeous Shaw Brothers studio settings (complete with a pond and waterfall), giving the proceedings a gloss that is a nice contrast to the atmospheric sequences in and around the ghoulish lair where Chao performs his bloody deeds. The late, great Lo Lieh is wonderfully malevolent in a role similar to the one he essayed in the studio's 1976 production **BLACK MAGIC PART II** [aka **REVENGE OF THE ZOMBIES**] and the mixture of horror and kung fu is reminiscent of Shaw's co-production with Hammer Studios, **LEGEND OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN VAMPIRES** (1973; reviewed VW 48:58). More intricately plotted than that earlier effort, **HUMAN LANTERNS** offers an effective hybrid of prolific co-writer Ngai Hong/Ni Kuang's signature martial arts mystery and the kind of gruesome horror that began to appear in HK theaters during the 70s with the release of Ting

Shan-si's **BLOOD REINCARNATION** (1974). The kung fu on display (choreographed by Tang Chia/Tong Kai and Huang Pei-chi) is fluid and often wire-enhanced, adding to the otherworldly atmosphere engendered by the production design and lighting. Excellent use is made of the scope frame, with the carefully planned and executed set-ups offering plenty of exposure for the intricate art direction and lighting. The soundtrack includes music lifted from Akira Ifukube's score for the original **DAIMAJIN** (1966) and, in the final moments, **PHANTASM**. Tanny/Tien Nei co-stars as Lung's far more enlightened wife; Ha Ping, and SB sex star Yum Yum Shaw also appear.

The 2.35:1 transfer (a PAL conversion that would run 94m 48s at 24 frames-per-second) looks exceptionally good, despite a lack of anamorphic enhancement. The image is extremely sharp, colors are wonderfully saturated (preserving the integrity of the various lighting gels and the elaborate traditional costumes), contrasts are excellent, and blacks perfectly solid. Some very slight DVNR jitter can be seen at times, but this is a minor trade-off, considering how beautifully clean the picture is throughout. As with most Shaw productions, slight bending can occasionally be seen at the extreme horizontal edges of the frame, a fault of the CinemaScope lens the company used. (The image looked fine on the slightly curved movie theatre screens of yore.)

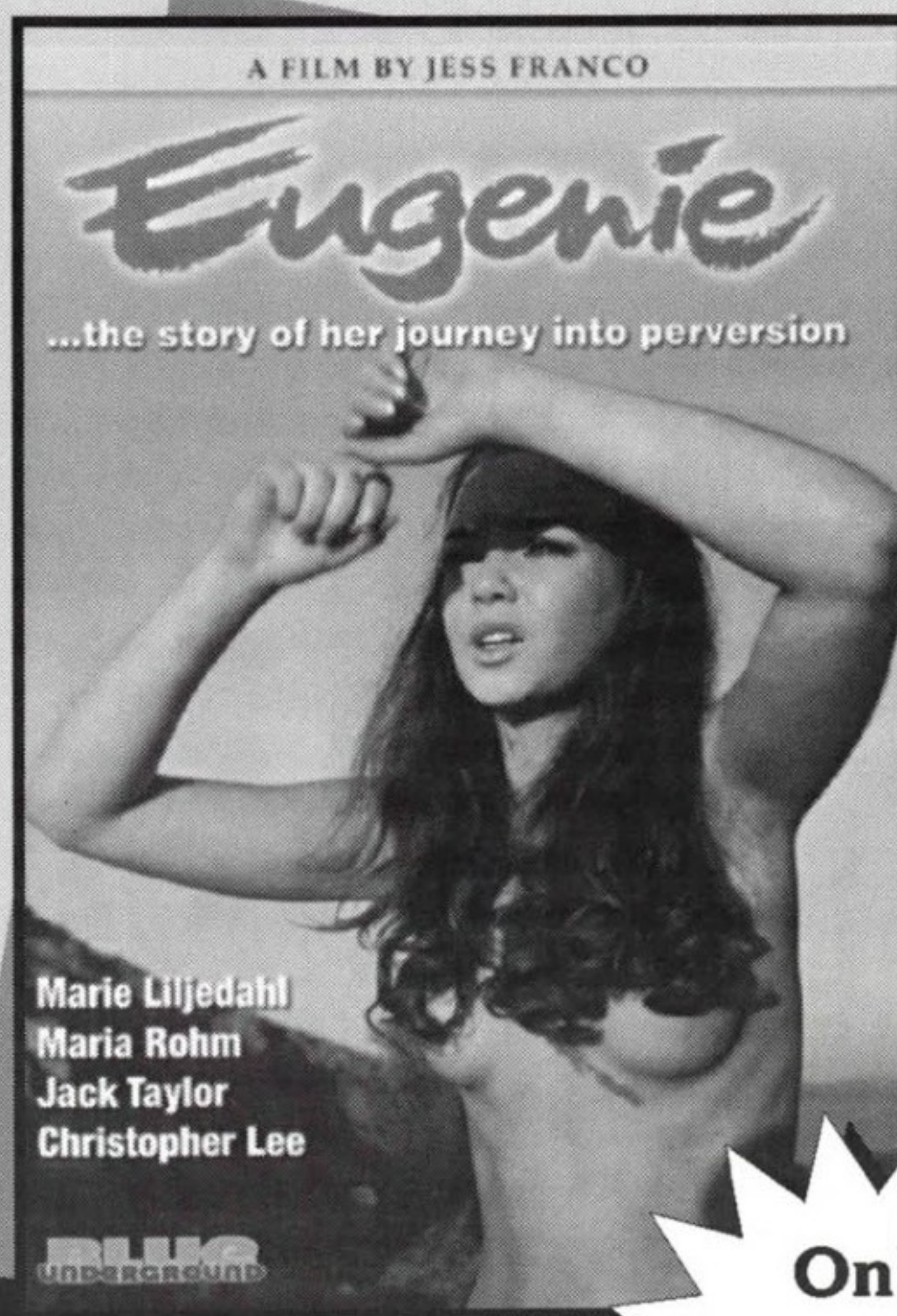
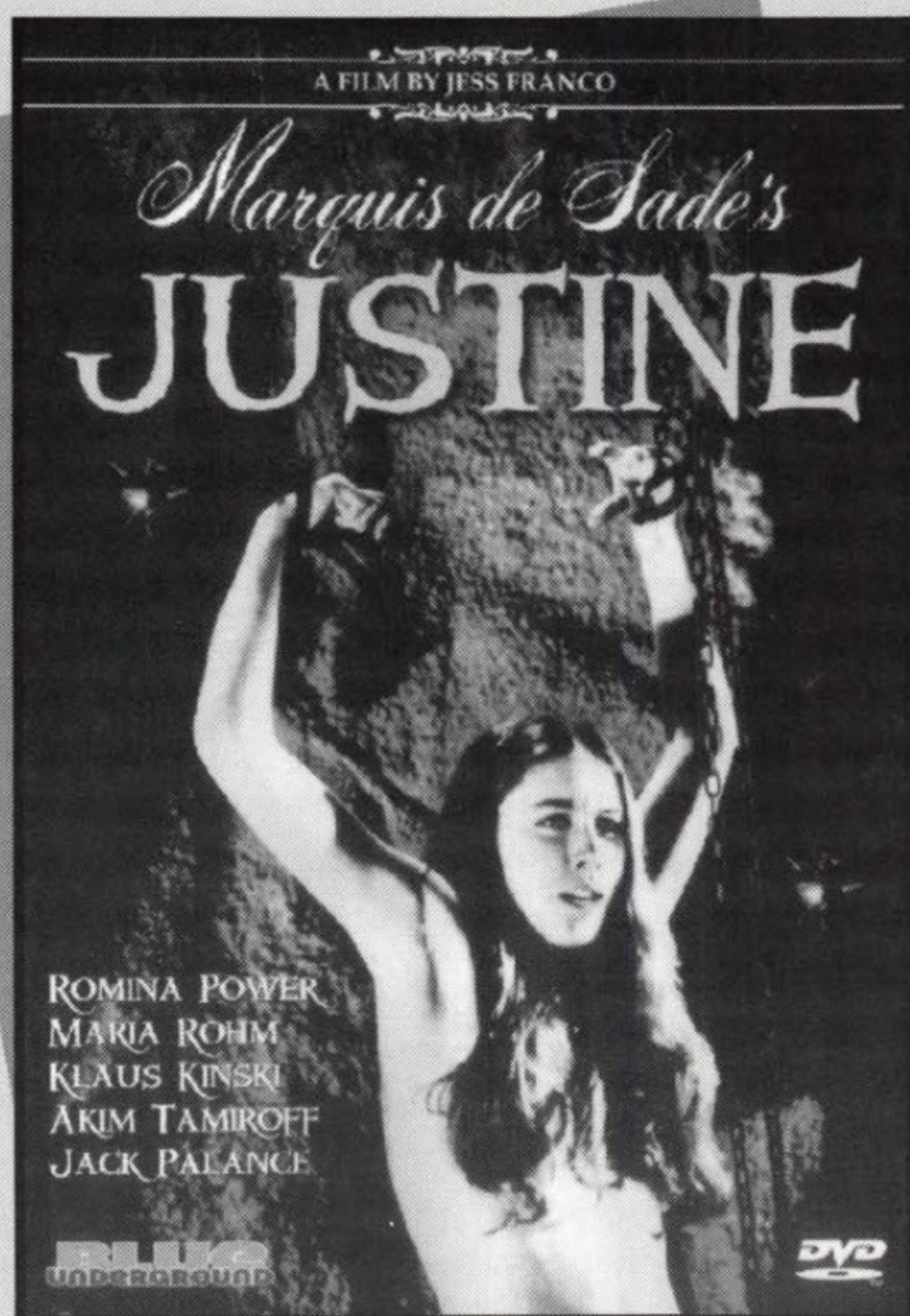
Thankfully presented in its original mono, the post-synched Mandarin language track is crisp and noise free, suffering only from some mild distortion when it is loudest, and a momentary dropout. The optional English subtitles appear entirely on the lower matte, discouraging Zoom

viewing, and suffer from occasional errors (subs are also available in Traditional & Simplified Chinese, Malaysian, and Indonesian). The Movie Information section offers a medium-sized photo gallery, the original theatrical poster, and production notes (merely a replication of the single paragraph description on the packaging), small bios/filmographies for the director, Liu, Chen, and Lo. The original trailer is not on offer, but there is a video promo spot and trailers for four other titles. As with all of the releases thus far, the disc comes in a clear keepcase with an outer cardboard sleeve.

As mentioned, the presentation is disrupted by several instances of censorship that result in jarring edits that even disrupt the soundtrack. Chao's killing and mutilation of Yen-chu is bracketed by two very obvious jump cuts, leaving only a brief bit of skin peeling. We never see the fate of one female victim, and Chao's murder of an elderly male interloper in Chapter 9 is missing entirely. The original version reportedly also contained some nudity, but there is none to be found here. Celestial has not commented on this but, if they are indeed working from the original materials, then the Shaws cut the footage in question right out of the negative. If that is indeed the case, the odds of it ever being restored are virtually zero and none. It is possible that the eliminations were ordered by HK censors, but internet posts from people who saw the movie in HK during its original run back in 1982 and Pete Tombs' book **MONDO MACABRO** refute this. Alas, we are left with a stunning and highly polished approximation... but not the genuine article. Available from Poker Industries (see Sources).



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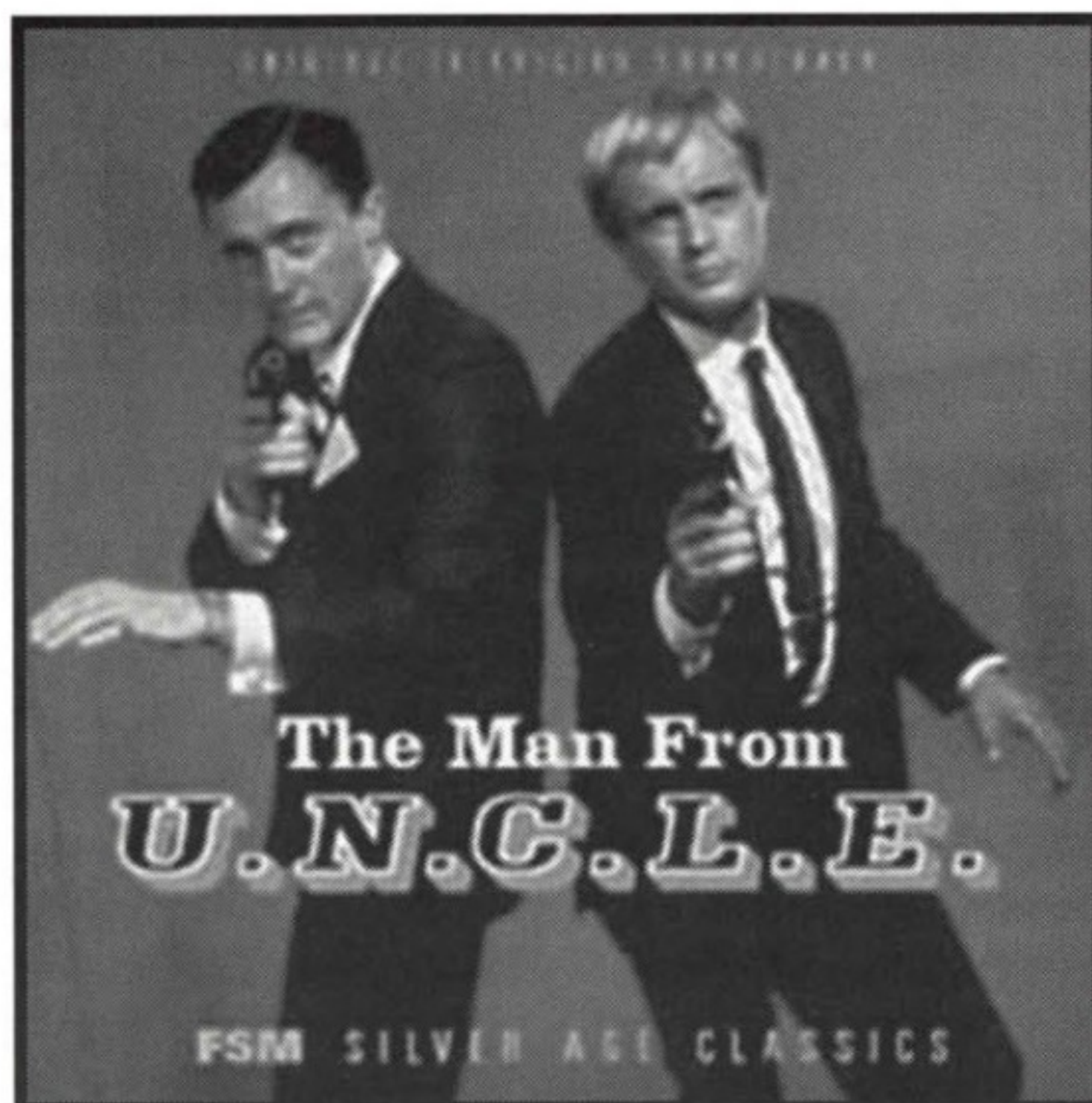
By Douglas E. Winter

Spy Fi

Two of television's great espionage series of the 1960s, *THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.* and *I SPY*, have been given classic soundtrack treatment courtesy of Film Score Monthly—in CDs showcasing the never-before-released original music from each program with consummate sound and handsome packaging.

THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. (FSM Vol. 5 no. 18, \$24.95, two discs, 25 tracks, 153m 13s) is FSM's most ambitious package to date, presenting some 2.5 hours of original music, including Jerry Goldsmith's main and end titles in the variant 5/4 and 4/4 versions heard over the show's four seasons (1964-68). The two disc set collects suites from 20 *U.N.C.L.E.* episodes composed by Goldsmith, Gerald Fried, Lalo Schifrin, Morton Stevens, Walter Scharf, and season three and four mainstays Robert Drasnin and Richard Shores. The selections include Fried's music for the two-part "Alexander the Greater Affair," which was later released to theaters as the feature **ONE SPY TOO MANY** (1966).

I SPY (FSM Vol. 5 no. 10, \$19.95, 25 tracks, 77m 57s) showcases five episode scores from the first American TV series to pair white and black actors in leading roles. Its signature jazzy sound was delivered by Earle Hagen (a regular for Sheldon Leonard productions, who—along with Hugo Friedhofer—penned original scores for each



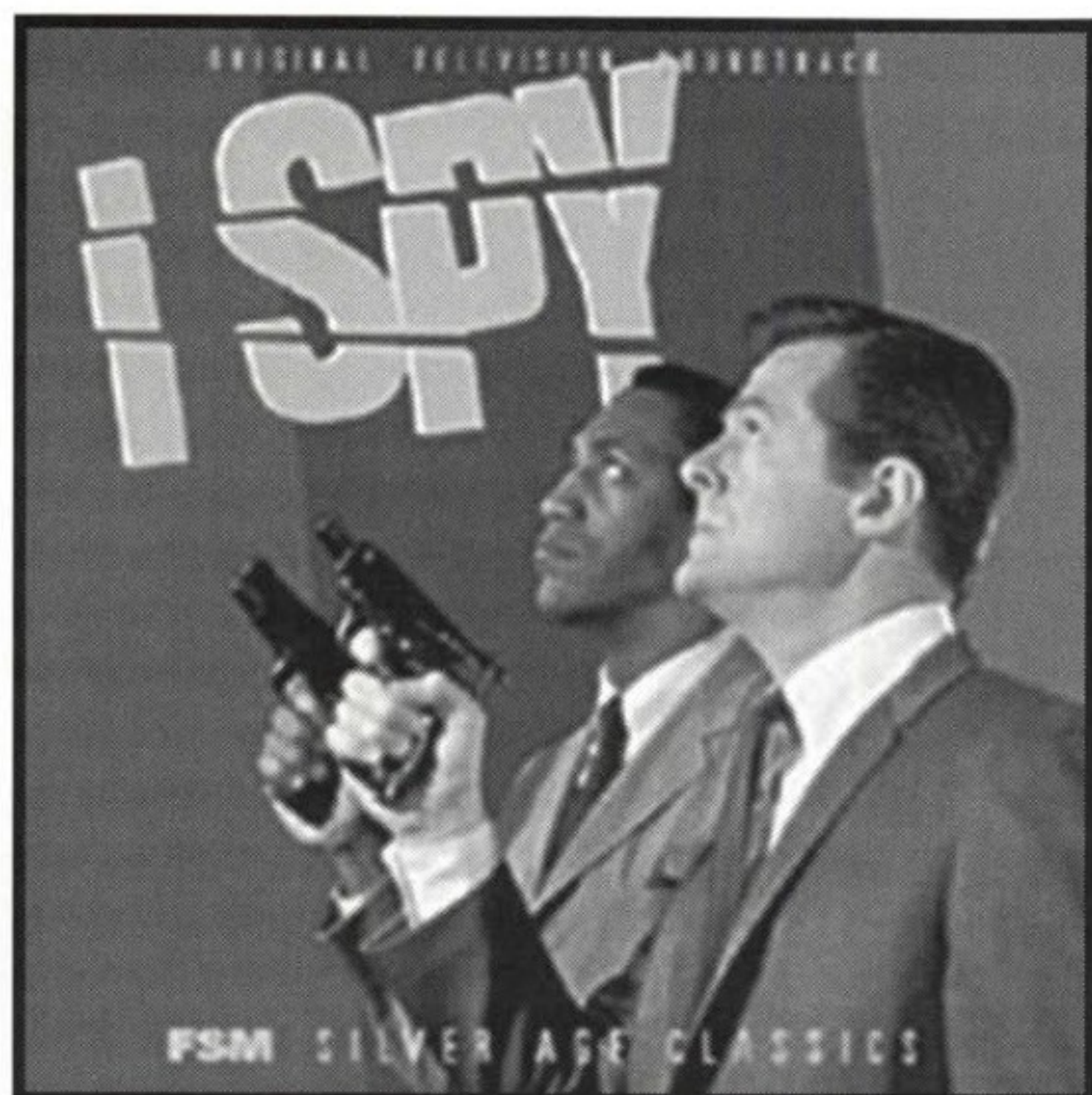
of *I SPY*'s 82 episodes from 1965 to 1968). Kicking things off is the memorable waltz-time main title as heard in the series premiere, "So Long, Patrick Henry"—whose music follows; and after a rousing trip down Memory Lane—in stereo or mono, as recorded—the disc concludes with the music for "Mainly on the Plains" (which guest-starred Boris Karloff) and the familiar end title.

Although *THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.* and *I SPY* were Sixties hits on LP as well as on television—featured on authorized "soundtrack" albums and untold cover versions—the official vinyl releases were re-recordings (by Hugo Montenegro and Hagen, respectively). The FSM discs are thus the premiere releases of the original music; and with ample booklets chronicling the shows and their music, they're must-haves for any listener.

End Titles

Also new from Film Score Monthly are scores from two films that helped define the nuclear age as the beginning of the end. **ABOVE AND BEYOND**, the 1952 dramatization of Operation Silverplate and the bombing of Hiroshima, was gifted with a truly moving—and Academy Award-nominated—score by Hugo Friedhofer, conducted by then-22-year-old André Previn (FSM vol. 5 no. 11, \$19.95, 24 tracks, 55m 44s). Originally recorded in three-track stereo, the master tapes were destroyed by MGM after an ill-conceived cost-cutting transfer to quarter-inch mono; but FSM's restorative mastering is stunning, and a worthy tribute to this long-neglected score.

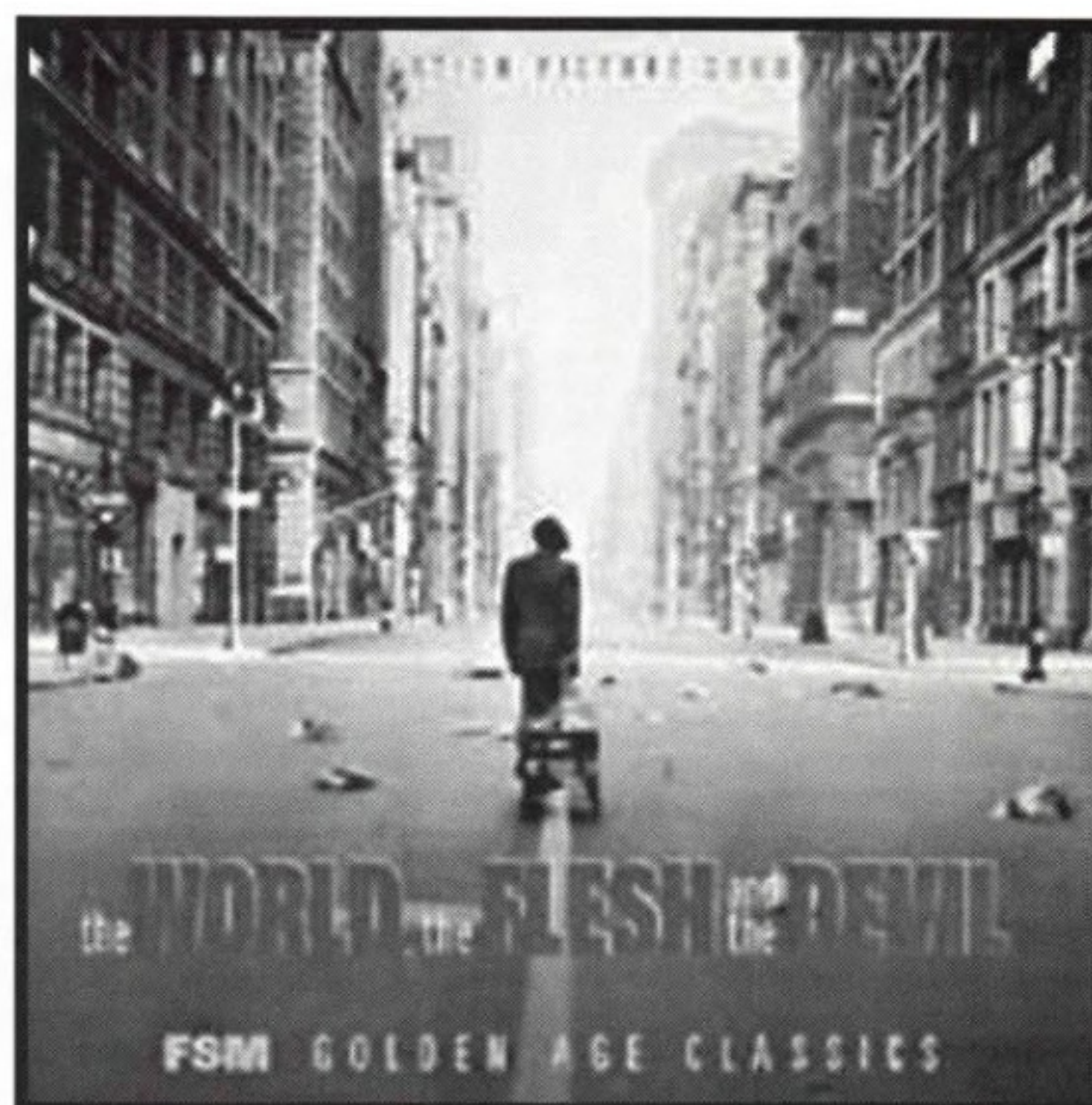
The swift descent from "above and beyond" heroics into the shadow of the mushroom cloud



is well-represented by *THE WORLD, THE FLESH AND THE DEVIL* (FSM vol. 5 no. 15, \$19.95, 20 tracks, 53m 26s), the score of a 1959 post-apocalyptic reverie starring Harry Belafonte, Inger Stevens, and Mel Ferrer as the only survivors of “sodium isotope gas.” This music, composed by the legendary Miklós Rózsa, is churning and moody, yet includes (perhaps in deference to Belafonte) some uncharacteristic jazz elements. This disc is the first-ever release of Rózsa’s complete score in stereo, and it includes alternate and deleted cues sequenced chronologically within the main score. (The three Belafonte songs from the film, which were not composed by Rózsa, were excluded from the CD for contractual reasons.)

Other recent discs from FSM’s ever-growing catalog of classics include *THE PRODIGAL*, a breathtaking Biblical epic score from Bronislau Kaper (FSM vol. 5 no. 9, \$19.95, 34 tracks, 75m 11s); Victor Young’s jaunty *SCARAMOUCHE* (FSM vol. 5 no. 13, \$19.95, 34 tracks, 62m 28s); Rózsa’s bellicose *THE GREEN BERETS*, which includes the film’s choral version of Barry Sadler’s “Ballad of the Green Berets” (FSM vol. 5 no. 14, \$19.95, 31 tracks, 72m 37s); and Jerry Goldsmith’s quirky—and strongly recommended—accompaniment for *THE PRIZE*, which prefigures his spy music for *THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.* and *IN LIKE FLINT* (FSM vol. 5 no. 16, \$19.95, 36 tracks, 76m 21s). The latter disc is filled with goodies—expanded with four prime cues that Goldsmith re-recorded for release on vinyl and nearly 20m of source cues.

FSM discs are available for \$19.95 plus shipping from Film Score Monthly, 8503 Washington Blvd, Culver City CA 90232. For more information, visit www.filmscoremonthly.com.



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For detailed information about Landmark and to join its Film Club, visit LandmarkTheatres.com. (Please note: Landmark’s CDs are not available by mail, but for pick-up by club members at any Landmark Theatre. No purchase is necessary, but supplies of each disc are limited.)

Review materials should be sent c/o One Eyed Dog, PO Box 27305, Washington DC 20038. The Audio Watchdog is on-line at OnEyeDog@aol.com.



BIBLIO WATCHDOG

WHITE ZOMBIE

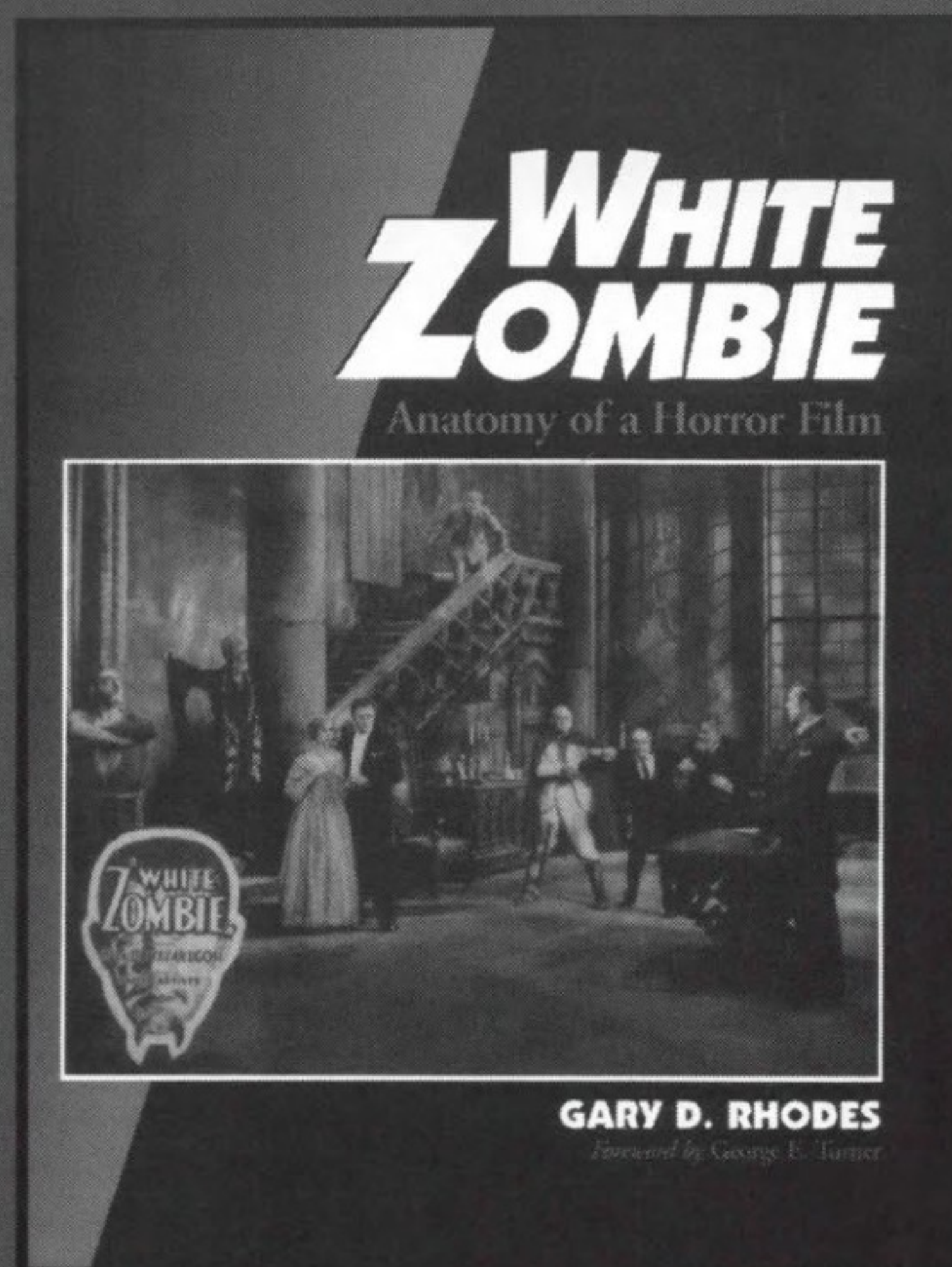
ANATOMY OF A HORROR FILM

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Reviewed by
Richard Harland Smith

In a word, *wow!* For those feeling underwhelmed by the glib overstatement and shoddy scholarship that characterize too many small press books devoted to genre cinema, Gary D. Rhodes (author of *LUGOSI: HIS LIFE IN FILMS, ON STAGE AND IN THE HEARTS OF HORROR LOVERS*, McFarland, 1997) offers a heady tonic: everything you've always wanted to know about Victor Halperin's **WHITE ZOMBIE**, and so much more you never thought to ask. A university professor and documentary filmmaker, Rhodes has collected decades of research into one deceptively slim volume. Illustrated with *exceedingly* rare on-set snaps, production stills, Halperin family photographs, publicity material and a wealth of related imagery, **WHITE ZOMBIE: ANATOMY OF A HORROR FILM** is at once a reasoned critical response, an informed academic reading, an impeccably-researched production history and an insightful cultural analysis of a low budget spookshow that, despite the poverty of its pedigree, continues to be discussed and enjoyed 70 years later.

One needn't be pre-sold on the charms of **WHITE ZOMBIE** to benefit from this "exhaustive historical account," which works equally well as a portrait of independent filmmakers plying their trade during the Great Depression. With 12 million Americans unemployed, Hollywood downscaling production and cinema owners forced to offer double and triple bills to attract audiences, director Victor Halperin and his producer brother Edward attempted to profit from the nascent (and yet unnamed) horror genre that began with the 1931-32 triumvirate of **DRACULA**, **FRANKENSTEIN** and **DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE**.



Retaining the services of a debt-ridden Bela Lugosi, makeup man Jack Pierce, cinematographer Arthur Martinelli, faded ingénue Madge Bellamy, vaudeville performer Joseph Cawthorn and silent film star Robert Frazer, the Halperins crafted "the weirdest of all thrillers" in only 11 days, shooting on the Universal lot with set leftovers from **THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME**, **THE CAT AND THE CANARY**, **DRACULA** and even **KING OF KINGS**. The film proved sufficiently successful to raise the Halperins' stock (their next picture was **SUPERNATURAL** for Paramount) and to "move the horror film cycle to its next stage, one in which more horror films than before were produced and one in which most of them openly advertised their content as horror-related."

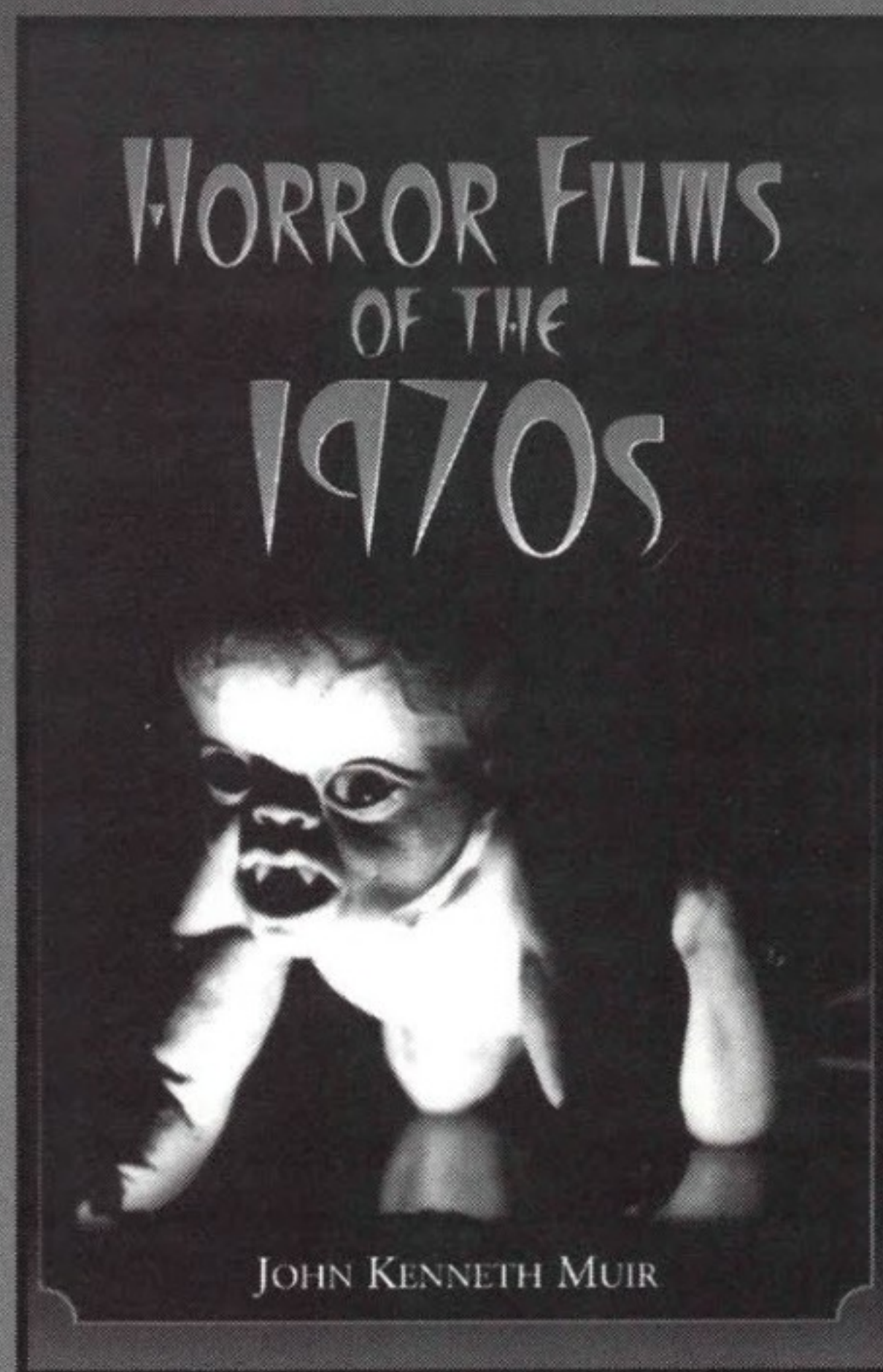
In addition to discussing the troubled history of Haiti and America's fascination with voodoo (recent

events put a different light on the 1915 US invasion of Haiti), **WHITE ZOMBIE: ANATOMY OF A HORROR FILM** charts the impact of the film at the time of its release by United Artists and in revival through the '30s, '40s and '50s. Rhodes tracks the career arc of the brothers Halperin from their brief A-list tenure (well before it died at the box office, **SUPERNATURAL** was plagued by the enmity of star Carole Lombard and an earthquake that shook Hollywood in March 1933) to their return to the minors, where they helmed **WHITE ZOMBIE**'s nominal sequel, **REVOLT OF THE ZOMBIES**. As indebted as **WHITE ZOMBIE** was (the author argues) to fairy tales, German Romanticism, William B. Seabrook's 1929 bestseller **THE MAGIC ISLAND** (one chapter of this ode to Haiti focused on zombiism) and to earlier dramas like Fritz Lang's **DESTINY** and the John Barrymore vehicle **SVENGALI**, the film inspired its own subgenre of voodoo thrillers—from the low-rent **BLACK MOON** and **OUANGA** to the classier **THE GHOST BREAKERS** and **I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE**. Images from **WHITE ZOMBIE** have turned up in several recent films (including Tim Burton's **ED WOOD**); in 1985, a heavy metal band appropriated the title and Thomas Pynchon name-checked the film in his monumental 1973 novel **GRAVITY'S RAINBOW**.

Proving again that the Devil's in the details, Rhodes supplements his Big Picture with a fortune in factoids: that star Madge Bellamy once spurned the affections of canned food magnate Jay Hormel, that co-star Clarence Muse penned the Louis Armstrong signature song "When It's Sleepy Time Down South" and that **WHITE ZOMBIE**'s hodge-podge score made use not only of classic themes by Wagner and Liszt, but also a cue cribbed from the silent western **THE COVERED WAGON** (1923) and an original *jota* by Xavier Cugat! (This last bit of trivia was first published in George E. Turner and Michael H. Price's **FORGOTTEN HORRORS**, but certainly bears repeating.) Rhodes quotes extensively from **WHITE ZOMBIE**'s outré press kits, reveling in the ballyhoo ("Hire several Negroes to sit in front of your theatre and beat a steady tattoo on tom-toms...") and challenging outlandish PR claims and production myths (inexplicably, the rumor that Madge Bellamy was dubbed by another actress was started by Bellamy herself!). Rhodes caps the book with a biography of Victor Halperin, a report on **WHITE ZOMBIE**'s restoration for laserdisc, excerpts from reviews of the film (vintage and contemporary) and several appendices of theater grosses, pressbook reprints, a list of the film's 25 incarnations on video cassette, a **WHITE ZOMBIE** shot list and a summation of the subsequent careers of cast and crew—and so much more, it's scary.

The late George E. Turner provides a thoughtful Foreword (written in 1996, a hint of this volume's vine-ripening) and Victor Halperin's widow Venetia contributes her own blessing for this "splendid book." In his own Introduction, Gary Rhodes takes to task the "hasty generalizations and speculations" that plague too many genre studies and suggests that "perhaps the current text on **WHITE ZOMBIE** can serve as a model of one way to study the life of a film."

We can only hope.



HORROR FILMS OF THE 1970s

By John Kenneth Muir

McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611, Jefferson NC 28640; www.mcfarlandpub.com, 672 pp., \$59.95 (hardcover) plus \$4.00 shipping

Reviewed by Richard Harland Smith

It's hard to imagine anyone with clear memories of the time in question being satisfied by John Kenneth Muir's **HORROR FILMS OF THE 1970s**, a year-by-year analysis of select American and European fright flicks released Stateside between 1970-79. Not content to discuss mere movies, Muir considers himself something of a social historian, segueing from film criticism to glib summations about "the disco decade" that are more reductive than illustrative. Born in 1969, Muir may be forgiven for lacking first hand knowledge of those years, but less acceptable are his


cliché-ridden reminiscences of “the free sex, the drug use, the divorces, the infidelities and the lies” of an era “in which the ‘macho man’ was vying for superiority with the intellectual, sensitive man of the hippie era.” If a decade could sue for slander, this book would be Exhibit A. The author’s smug, self-amused style becomes so aggravating that readers may find themselves increasingly less tolerant of the book’s many gaffes and glaring factual errors.

The first goof appears as early as page 6, with a photo of Peter Cushing from **THE CREEPING FLESH** (1972) credited to **THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN** (1957)—a significant *faux pas*, given that the 16 years between the films spans the bulk of Cushing’s tenure as a horror icon. More egregious boners cite Ken Wiederhorn’s **SHOCK WAVES** (1977) as a 1970 release and Bud Townsend’s California cannibal movie **TERROR HOUSE** (aka **THE FOLKS AT RED WOLF INN**, 1972) as an Australian production—with the author believing the film is even *set* in Australia! More confounding is the author’s claim that Ted Gershuny’s Yuletide proto-slasher **SILENT NIGHT, BLOODY NIGHT** (1973) “has absolutely nothing to do with the holiday season” despite the fact that wreaths, Santa cut-outs, Christmas trees and Christmas lights are conspicuous in several scenes, Christmas carols are heard over radios, star Mary Woronov is shown wrapping Christmas presents and co-star James Patterson bids her a “Merry Christmas”! Cast lists for the films discussed are compromised by numerous errors, most regarding foreign films. Identifying **DON’T LOOK NOW**’s Massimo Serato as playing “Wendy,” Muir betrays his unfamiliarity with the veteran Italian actor, while various players for Dario Argento (Macha Meril, Glauco Mauri, Flavio Bucci, Nicoletta Elmi) have their names butchered beyond recognition. This is unacceptable.

It’s one thing for the author to index foreign films by the year of their American release, but more troubling is his reliance on video to assess basic worth. Jerry Jameson’s video-retitled **IT LIVES BY NIGHT** (1974) is never connected to its AIP theatrical release title of **THE BAT PEOPLE**, while Bill Gunn’s **GANJA & HESS** (1973) is called “muddled” solely on the basis of its variant (and greatly different) cut **BLOOD COUPLE**. Had Muir judged Dario Argento’s **DEEP RED** (1975) via the widescreen DVD rather than the old pan&scan tape (which runs nearly 30m shorter), he might have awarded the film better than ★★½. Because Muir seems unaware that that Curtis Harrington’s **RUBY** (1977) was recut by its executive producer

against Harrington’s wishes, he is unsure where to assign blame for “the longest 80 minutes of your life.” Muir also fails to go behind the Anglicized surnames of European directors, and so Santo Alcocer’s **CAULDRON OF BLOOD** [*El Coleccionista de Cadaveres*, 1967] is attributed to “Edward Mann” and Eugenio Martín’s **HORROR EXPRESS** [*Pánico en el Transiberiano*, 1972] to “Gene Martin.” The author seems unaware that **CHILDREN SHOULDN’T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS** director Benjamin Clark is the “Bob” Clark who helmed **BLACK CHRISTMAS**; he sees similarly unaware that Clark also made **DEATH DREAM** (aka **DEAD OF NIGHT**, 1972), **DERANGED** (1974) and **MURDER BY DECREE** (1979)—incidentally, just three widely-distributed horror films of the Seventies that receive not a murmur of reference in **HORROR FILMS OF THE 1970s**.

When the author isn’t tripping himself up with too little research or insufficient note-taking, his style delivers the *coupe de grace* in the form of paper-wasting rhetorical questions (“Why is Dracula so popular a story to dramatize? The answers are numerous...”), facile political parallels (the witch hysteria of Ken Russell’s **THE DEVILS** is compared to the 1999 Clinton impeachment) and unsolicited testimonials (“This author does not believe in censorship. He is not part of the moral majority”). Even when Muir’s arguments are well-founded, he deflates their thrust by never knowing when to shut up. Worthwhile observations about **STRAW DOGS**, **BLOOD ON SATAN’S CLAW** and **DON’T LOOK NOW** (among others) are diluted by long-windedness; Muir’s pan of Jess Franco’s **EL Conde Dracula** [US: **COUNT DRACULA**, 1970] digresses into a rant against the use of the zoom lens, a diatribe to which the author devotes *three paragraphs* that repeat the same argument (“A quick zoom... can generate a scare or a laugh, if done just right”) again (“When used sparingly and suddenly, a zoom can have dramatic and meaningful effect...”) and again (“When used all the time, the zoom loses its potency”). What temerity, then, for Muir to diagnose what he perceives to be writer-director George A. Romero’s failure to cut his work “down to an efficient length.”

It would be hard to keep diehard fans of ’70s horror away from a book bearing such a title, and one so enticingly thick—and we won’t try. Of dubious value as a social chronicle and unreliable as a reference book, **HORROR FILMS OF THE 1970s** might yet prove diverting for the undemanding, so long as they observe a key tenet of “the hippie era” and remember not to believe everything they read. 

THE LETTERBOX



RINGWEAR

Regarding Richard Harland Smith's article on the various RING movies [VW 92:26], one possible reason why Tartan Video's DVD of the first film looks a bit battered may be because **RING** had already enjoyed a very successful theatrical release in the UK, also through Tartan. This built-up tremendous word of mouth in the UK, far more than the very limited audience who saw it at the Edinburgh Film Festival and led to **RING 2** also being released theatrically over here.

As Richard notes, a subtitled DVD of **Rasen** is due

out later this year from Artsmagic, on their Eastern Cult Cinema label. Artsmagic have some terrific titles in their current and future catalogue, including **HYPNOSIS**, **PYROKINESIS**, **EVIL DEAD TRAP (1 and 2)**, **JUNK**, **FUDOH**, **WILD ZERO** and **UZUMAKI**, and I've got a rather neat job writing biographical and filmographical notes for them. They are also releasing the world DVD premiere of an extraordinary CGI animation called **MALICE@DOLL**, until now only available on Japanese VHS.

M.J. Simpson
Leicester
United Kingdom

SHADES OF GRAY

I enjoyed the reprinting of Joe Dante's trade reviews of select Amicus films [VW 91:22-25], but would like to offer one slight correction—even if it does come thirty years too late! In his review of **TALES THAT WITNESS MADNESS**, Mr. Dante mentions that Jack Hawkins died before he could loop his voice, and that the voice used in the film is "poorly dubbed." In fact, Mr. Hawkins had lost his voice to cancer of

Jonathan Harker
(John Van Eyssen)
adds an entry to his diary in
HORROR OF DRACULA.

the larynx some years before (if you look at some shots in the film—55:25-37, for example—you can see the radical work that was done to extend his life; the man has hardly any flesh left under his jawbone at all), and thus it would have been quite impossible for him to do any post-production syncing. As for the voice that displeased Mr. Dante, it actually belonged to none other than actor Charles Gray (**THE DEVIL RIDES OUT, THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW**), who dubbed many of Hawkins' later performances.

Finally, a bit of trivia about "Henry Hite," the odd-looking 10-foot giant of **MONSTER A GO GO** [VW 91:52-55]. His real name was Henry Mullens (1915 - ?), and his actual standing was 7 feet, 6 inches. Hardly Goliath-like, but certainly Shaq-esque!

Bill Powell
Orlando FL

THE FULL JOAN

To add to the Umlands' review of **JOAN THE MAID** [VW 91:18]: there is a longer cut of the film. The Canadian company Alliance Video has released it on two cassettes, stock numbers AVFV 1671 for **Les Batailles** at 155m and AVFV 1672 for **Les Prisons** at 169m. The French Canadian cassettes are presented with standard framing and, unfortunately, are not subtitled. I also saw the uncut version of the film at the Pacific Film Archive several years ago. Since the PFA had access to the longer version for exhibition, Facets must have known of its existence. I'm curious as to why they didn't release the longer cut.

The other release of the film that I'm aware of is also of

the shorter version. Columbia released the two parts on laserdisc, stock numbers COLM-6143 and COLM-6144 ~ 5 with a combined play time of 238m. (Note: there is a spurious timing of 186m listed for *Jean la Pucelle: Les Prisons* on the sleeve and in LD MONTHLY). Although I haven't revved up the ol' laserdisc player to check, I do remember that the discs are letterboxed and that the second disc of *Les Prisons* is rounded out with trailers/advertisements for *Jean*, as well as *La Belle Noiseuse* and *Pont du Nord*. I'm fairly certain that the trailers for **CELINE AND JULIE GO BOATING** and **LOVE ON THE GROUND** are also present.

Alan Husby
Millbrae CA

SOMETHING WEIRDNESS

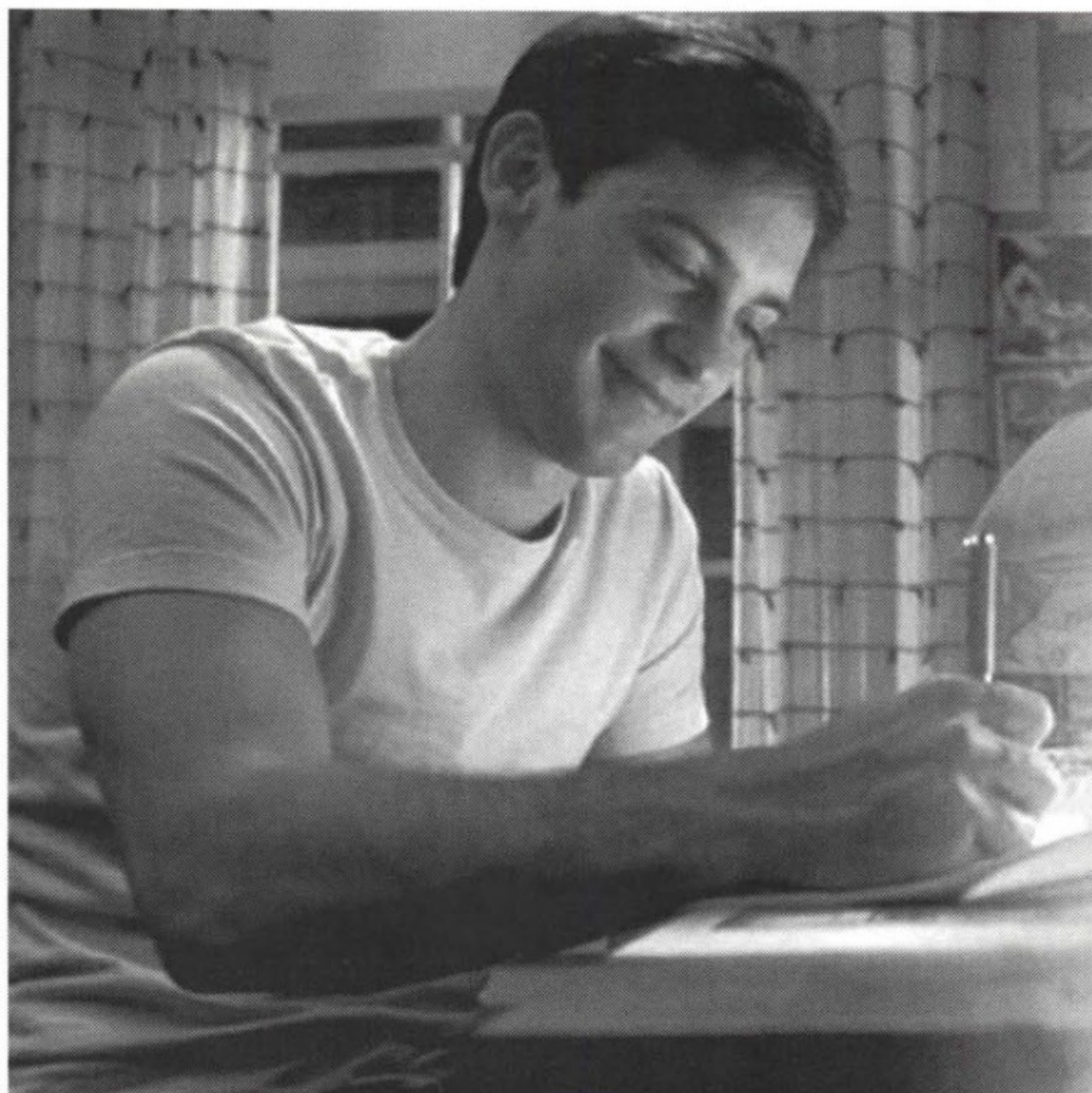
We have just been looking over the latest issue [VW #92] and, as usual, it is super-fantabulous. Just had one or two things to say about Shane Dallmann's review of **CURSE OF THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN** [VW 92:48-51]. He left out the best part! Okay, not the best part, but certainly the *funniest* part. There is a flashback scene that explains where the Headless Horseman came from—namely, he got killed during a shootout with some Western type bad guys. While it is certainly interesting to see squib work in a 1972 low budget movie, these were the old style squibs that required a connection to a detonator, and it is more than a little distracting to see these late 19th century gunslingers with wires running down their pantlegs and across the ground! Never mind asking, "If six guys were gunned down that day, why did only one come

back as the Headless Horseman? And where did his head go, since all the men were shot in the chest?" Just keep repeating "It's only a movie... it's only a movie..."

In **DRACULA, THE DIRTY OLD MAN** [VW 92:51], the mine shaft he lives in is actually the ubiquitous Bronson Canyon. That rubber bat on a wire actually looks even less realistic than those older Mexican vampire movies that obviously inspired it. That "werewolf" makeup, three fingered gloves and all, turned up later that same year in the Anthony Eisley/John Carradine late night thriller **THE MUMMY AND THE CURSE OF THE JACKALS**. Eisley (or his stunt double) wore the outfit after he was cursed by the 3000 year old Egyptian princess Akanna. Oh, not to get off the track, but has anyone else noticed the names of the princess and the mummy in this movie, "Akanna" and "Shirak" are anagrams for "Ananka" and "Kharis"?

Lori S. Burnett
Maniac Productions, Inc.

*Since neither feature in the **CARNIVAL OF BLOOD/CURSE OF THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN** double feature was matted or letterboxed, they were probably intended to be softmatted in theatrical projection. That would have concealed up the telltale squib wires running out of the gunmen's leggings. The filmmakers really shouldn't be judged as careless or ridiculed for what is really a matter of improper presentation. With this in mind, we will belatedly recommend to readers with widescreen TVs to watch these non-16:9 movies in Zoom mode, which will give you less picture but deliver the experience intended. I made a similar point in my*



Tobey Maguire roughs out some costume concepts in Sam Raimi's SPIDER-MAN.

review of *Something Weird's DRACULA THE DIRTY OLD MAN*, which was also issued unmatted.

IS IT A KEEPER?

I just wanted to issue a warning to VW readers following an item mentioned in Douglas E. Winter's "Audio Watchdog" column in VW 87, regarding the Orange Records issue of *THE KEEP* soundtrack (ORCD-2011983). This album is identical, barring the addition of four extra cues at the end, to the limited edition of *THE KEEP: ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SOUNDTRACK* issued by the band themselves through TDI Music International and only ever included as part of their Millennium Box. Now for the bad news...

Despite its title, the album only features two cues actually used in *THE KEEP*—and, without wanting to second-guess the musical tastes of VW readers, might I humbly suggest that neither of these are the cues they are likely to be hungering to hear again (anyone expecting, for example, to enjoy TD's innovative reworking of composer Howard Blake's theme from *The Snowman* cartoon, which plays over much of *THE KEEP's* climax, is going to be sorely disappointed). As to whether the rest of the music comprises material written for the movie and subsequently never used is open to question. So many myths and downright lies have already been written about this soundtrack and its continued unavailability that I hesitate to add any more on the subject.

But given the absurd prices for which the Orange Records release is changing hands on eBay (the discovery of which partly prompted this letter), I think it only fair to advise buyers to approach the album with caution. While diehard *Tangerine Dream* fans will no doubt welcome the album into their collection, anyone wanting to get hold of the music from *THE KEEP* is going to get badly burned.

You'd be better advised to either save your money and hope that one day someone will actually get around to issuing a bona fide soundtrack album. Or, if you really can't wait that long, try tracking down the Blue Moon Records bootleg soundtrack, a decidedly lo-fi recording which does, at least, make a reasonable attempt to assemble the music cues used in the movie, albeit from various different sources.

David Taylor
London, England

DR. TERROR'S DISC OF MODERATE RISK

Le cinque chiave del terrore ("The Five Cards of Terror") is a new Italian DVD release of the Amicus horror film *DR. TERROR'S HOUSE OF HORRORS*. This Italian release from Pulp Video is welcome because it is the first time this film has been available for home viewing in its correct Techniscope aspect ratio. The widescreen format, along with a very clear print, makes available detail which has not been seen since its theatrical release in 1965.

For example, immediately after the "Voodoo" segment, the sinister reflection of Dr. Schrek appears behind Roy Castle's left shoulder, in a window of the train

carriage. The sudden and unnerving appearance of this image is, of course, completely absent in previous P&S versions.

Also, at the climax of the film, immediately after the revelation of Dr. Schreck's skull face, there is a reaction shot of the five dead protagonists, in which we see their expressions of shock and horror. In the pan&scan version, there are two shots to show us this: the first shows Freeman and McCallum; the second shows us Christopher Lee, Roy Castle and Donald Sutherland. In the widescreen version, these two shots become one shot capturing all five actors in frame. I had seen stills of this image before, but never before in the movie itself.

I am sure there are many other specific examples but these were the two which immediately struck me. It was like seeing the movie properly for the first time. That said, the disc is not without its disappointments.

Although an English track is available, it is not possible to option this without the Italian subtitles. This is a nuisance and I am sure the technology would have allowed the possibility of removal of the subtitles, had someone taken the trouble to think of it. Also, the opening credits are the from the Italian version, which are blandly rephotographed. The original title sequence should have been included as an extra. An "original title sequence" is promised by the disc, but it is not this, rather an interesting variation—the giveaway is the title presented by this sequence: **Die Todeskarten Des Dr. Schreck** ("The Death Cards of Dr. Schreck")!! I can see where the disc producers made their error, as the credits are otherwise entirely in English.

But the main flaw of this Italian import is that the climax of the film has been altered—and greatly to the film's detriment, in my view. In the Italian version, we have the revelation of Schreck as the skull-faced Grim Reaper, followed by the reaction shot of the five passengers, after which the screen goes black with the closing caption 'Fine'. The end music plays out over this black background. Gone is the slow walk of Schreck from the station, followed by the five dead men. Why the Italians decided to drop this final footage is anybody's guess. Also gone are the closing credits, which gave a segment-specific breakdown of the cast. Once again, the original end sequence is presented as an extra feature but this, too, is a disappointment. Apart from the fact that the quality is so poor as to be virtually unwatchable, it is also missing about 20 seconds of footage (showing Schreck slowly exiting the station).

The original theatrical trailer is a bittersweet offering. Whilst it is a pleasure to view this rarely-seen trailer in any condition, it was in very poor shape indeed, covered in scratches throughout. Also, it is the Italian language version with no English subtitles. However, of interest is the fact that the trailer contains the closing moments of the film, which are not contained in the Italian version of the feature itself!

One advantage of being forced to watch the film with Italian subtitles was that it drew my attention to the interesting fact that the Italian dialogue version contains a good deal of extra dialogue. For example, in the "Vampire" segment, Max Adrian's instructions to Donald

Sutherland on how to destroy a vampire are more detailed. Also, after Sutherland is arrested for killing his wife, he shouts accusations at Adrian not in the original English dialogue. Further, after the segment, back on the train, when Sutherland is shown the fifth card of his reading (Death), the Italian track has him scoffing in response; the English track has him merely making a fatalistic sigh.

But the most interesting piece of extra dialogue—and, to me, probably the crowning jewel of this particular platter—occurs near the beginning of the movie. Christopher Lee gets on the train and gives a withering look to Castle, McCallum and Freeman. In the English version the three men simply exchange amused glances. In the Italian language version, one of the men quips, "... è arrivato Dracula!"—which, I guess, means something like "Here comes Dracula!" Authentic to the original or not, I think this line is absolutely wonderful. Might it have been in the original shooting script and dropped during shooting, perhaps at the insistence of Mr. Lee? Who knows?

Mark Middleman
Liverpool, England

*The Italian DVD of **La cinque chiave del terrore** is available from both Luminous Film and Video Wurks and Xploited Cinema; see our Sources page for details. One warning, though: while Mark seems to have had no problem accessing the English track, we didn't have the same luck using our Apex player. However, it is very nice, after all these years, to see the movie again in its proper scope dimensions.*



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